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Observations on some  
important points in divinity





# OBSERVATIONS

ON

SOME IMPORTANT POINTS IN DIVINITY:

CHIEFLY

Those in Controversy between

THE

*Arminians and Calvinists:*

WITH

**THREE DIALOGUES;**

IN WHICH THE SAID POINTS ARE FURTHER ILLUSTRATED.

*Extracted from an Author of the Seventeenth Century,*

BY ELY BATES, ESQ.

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Second Edition.

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With prefatory Remarks by the Editor :

AND

*ADDITIONAL EXTRACTS*

FROM BISHOP STILLINGFLEET, AND THE

REV. JOHN HOWE,

On the NATURE and CONDITIONALITY

*OF THE GOSPEL COVENANT.*

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## PREFACE

TO THE FORMER EDITION.

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**I**T is a saying recorded of Alphonsus, king of Arragon, surnamed the wise, That, *of the innumerable things in life, which are made objects of men's desires and pursuits, all are baubles, except old wood to burn, old wine to drink, old friends to converse with, and old books to read.* Upon the last of these articles particularly, having early taken up the opinion of this wise prince, it has been my practice to rummage the shops of old booksellers, where I have frequently discovered a mass of intellectual treasure lying in some obscure corner amidst dust and

cobwebs. In such circumstances, the work from which the present is extracted, came under my notice; the author I was not unacquainted with; and the opinion I had conceived of him inducing a perusal, I found a fresh and eminent proof of his piety and wisdom, the great extent of his theological knowledge, his acute discernment, his candour and charity. And when I considered, that this excellent work as it then existed, could be of little general use; it being at the same time scarce and bulky, very irregular in its composition, and encumbered with school learning; I thought it might be doing a service to the world, to publish an extract, containing its more essential parts, disentangled as much as possible from scholastic terms and subtleties.

Yet though the following specimen may prove more successful than the original work, I have no reason to expect that its readers will be very numerous. Theology is not a favourite study in the present age. Among its most celebrated writers some pass it by with neglect, as if man stood related only to man; others stop at the religion of



nature; while a third class proceed to those doctrines we owe purely to revelation with no better design, as might be supposed, than to humanize and degrade them, to misconstrue and explain them away: no wonder therefore that our holy religion is neither much regarded nor understood by the people in general who are so ill instructed; being taught to look upon the most important articles of our faith, as speculations that have little concern with the duty or happiness of mankind.

But as distinction is to be made among our modern apostles, so among the people who are taught by them. Men determined to indulge their passions, and who rebel against the light which condemns them, must be left to the consequences of their folly; while those who are rather weak than wicked, and would gladly extricate themselves from the toils of infidelity, require a patient indulgence; and every method should be employed to further their escape, and effectually win them to christianity.

Others we find who are possessed with a conceit of their own moral and intellectual

sufficiency. To persons of this description I know not what can be said: neither the following observations, nor any else that I can think of, seeming likely to work upon them, until they are reduced to a juster sense of themselves: and I can only lament the peril of their situation, who in their passage through a world so much involved in ignorance and misery, as they themselves must acknowledge it to be, fearlessly commit themselves to their own guidance, and confide in their own resources.

And in this class I fear are to be reckoned many in the present times, who though they profess a regard to the Bible, dispute some of its fundamental doctrines: like persons who wage war with their prince while pretending his name and authority. The scriptures are the ostensible, but reason, their own infallible reason, is the real standard they proceed by, and to which the other is reduced whenever they appear to differ, which must often be the case between the reason of man and the wisdom of God.

This is also an age of taste as well as reason; and the phraseology of scripture,

which abounds in the pious writers of the last century, is in danger of appearing uncouth, and occasioning disgust to men of modern refinement. To such we may observe, that every art and science must be allowed its peculiar language; and that when new discoveries are made, new words, or new combinations of words, may be wanting to express them. Cicero himself when he introduced the Greek learning among his countrymen, was forced to borrow from the Greek tongue; and a great modern author\* in establishing the principles of true philosophy, had to invent names as well as things. Let it then be permitted in delivering the philosophy of heaven, to employ such terms as are best adapted to convey its doctrines; and let no one who calls himself a christian, however polite or classical he may be, think his conversation or his page disgraced, and still less suffer himself to be offended, by a language he should be taught to venerate as authorized by divine wisdom.

I allow indeed, that among the excel-

\* Lord BACON.

lencies of our author, we are not to account his style; his words are sometimes ill chosen, his sentences unmeasured, nor is he always attentive to grammatical propriety. For these defects should any apology be necessary, it may be drawn partly from the age in which he lived, when men seemed more solicitous how to think than speak, to dig truth out of the mine than afterwards to work it into shape and polish it into elegance. All that I challenge for him is the truth and importance of his matter, which I am in hopes will not want readers who will afford it that attention it deserves.

For notwithstanding the late prevalence of a vain philosophy, and the frivolous humour of estimating things by the dress in which they appear, there are still to be found amongst us those of a more solid character, men of sobriety and sound sense, who are not disposed to reject truth because it happens not to agree with the opinions in vogue, or because it comes not recommended by the eloquence or address of its advocates; and who to this equity and justness of mind, add a reverence to christianity. And in this

number, some there are, no doubt, who are seriously apprehensive, that what the scriptures speak of *grace, faith, repentance*, with other points of the like nature, means more than is commonly understood; that the gospel is something more than morality; at the same time that they are very sure, as every man in his senses must be sure, that whatever under the name of the gospel supersedes or relaxes our moral obligations, is a gospel of human fabrication:—To such persons the following pages I conceive may be of singular use, by confirming their own previous apprehensions, and affording them such further light as may lead them on to know and embrace that gospel which *bringeth salvation*.

And should this volume fall into the hands of any who are fluctuating between the two rival systems, of Arminianism and Calvinism, it may direct them to that middle point, where all that is good in either seems to meet, and all that is exceptionable to be excluded: The grace of God being here vindicated without subverting his moral government; and the liberty of man assert-

ed without usurping upon the grace of God. Or though difficulties should still remain, and some difficulties must ever remain upon such subjects, so much at least is offered, as may greatly assist an impartial enquirer in forming his judgment.

As to those who think they have decided the matter, either by exalting man into a little divinity, or by degrading him into a machine; who to render him responsible raise him to independence, or to secure his dependance deprive him of responsibility: such ought to remember the danger of extremes: and *that* extreme more especially should excite their caution, which from the complexion of the times is become most dangerous.

Whatever has formerly been the case, there is certainly at present particular need to secure the doctrine of human liberty and responsibility, which it is the great aim of modern infidelity to overthrow. Be it so, that in some preceding periods christianity has been more endangered from the opposite quarter: do we forget that the enemy knows how to shift his ground; to change the whole

order of the war; and instead of contending in the open plains of liberty, to retire to the strong hold of necessity, which he finds more convenient both for aggression and defence? Was not the great champion in this age, and who has lately received honours almost idolatrous from a neighbouring nation, a *necessitarian*? Was not the pretended oracle of the former age a necessitarian? \* The most celebrated amongst our present reformers, is he not a necessitarian? How then must not every friend of christianity be jealous of a doctrine which hath such defenders; and how must they not grieve to see a man of a very different character, challenged as one of its most able advocates! I mean the excellent Mr. Edwards, whose treatise on *free will*, in which he unhappily endeavours to establish this doctrine, is recommended by Dr. Priestly as *unanswerable*. †

\* HOBBS.

† See p. 16 of the preface to the Dr.'s examination of Reid's enquiry, &c.

Mr. Edward's fundamental error seems to lie in confounding the soul's *imperate acts* with its *liking* or *pleasure*.

“ Zealous Calvinists,” says he “ who regard my writings with abhorrence, will be surprized to hear me so full and earnest in

In p. 2. of his treatise, he says, “ Whatever names we call the act of the will by, *a chusing, refusing, approving, disapproving, liking, disliking, embracing, rejecting, determining, directing, commanding, forbidding, inclining, or being averse to, being pleased, or displeas'd with*; all may be reduced to this of *chusing*.” And in p. 4. he makes a man’s *chusing, liking best, or being best pleas'd with a thing*, the same with his *willing that thing*.

That a drunkard in taking his cups (which is one of his instances, p. 10.) does what is most pleasing to him at the time, will easily be granted; but that he can never forbear from a view of duty, or other considerations, though the forbearance be less pleasing to him, is certainly not true.

He says, p. 11. “ If he chuses to refrain, then refraining is the immediate object of his *will*, and is most pleasing to him.” If he refrains, he certainly *wills* or determines to do so; but it does not therefore follow, that his refraining is more pleasing to him than quaffing his liquor; on the contrary, it may cost him a very painful exertion of his *will* against his *pleasure*: so far is it from being true, that to will or determine a thing, and to be best pleas'd with it, are always the same. This confusion of very distinct ideas runs through all his book, which I look upon to be one



my recommendation of a book which they themselves boast of, as the strongest bulwark of their own gloomy faith. And they must continue to wonder, as it would be to no purpose for me to explain to them why they ought not to wonder at the matter. What I should say on that subject would not be intelligible to them.”\* And just before he observes, that, “had this ingenious writer lived a little longer, and reflected upon the natural connection and tendency of his sentiments, he could not but have seen things in a very different light.”

It would seem that in the wisdom of God, the progress of error is sometimes checked by suffering it to display itself in all its extravagance; when no longer respecting the powerful suggestions of nature and experience, it does violence to the common sense and feelings of mankind: and in this

continued metaphysical quibble. If we allow an author to use the terms *willing, chusing, determining, commanding*, in the same sense with *approving, inclining to, liking best, or being best pleased with*, he may easily make out what he pleases.

\* Preface to Examination of Reid, &c. p. 18.

way possibly the philosophic necessitarians may have been of service to the cause of truth.

Good men I know there are, who being accustomed to more rigid notions, may be tempted hastily to condemn the following observations in some points of great consequence. If they have not *quite* made up their minds, I would beg them calmly to suspend till after the second or third reading, and then perhaps they will see cause to relax of their severity, and to adopt that milder system, which represents the gospel as bearing a benign aspect towards the whole human race, excluding none from its benefits who first exclude not themselves.

We live in an age which prides itself upon its liberality; all narrow distinctions are thrown down; and the common advantages of nature and society are made free to all. This being the general spirit, let not the greatest blessing which God ever bestowed upon the world, be fettered and obstructed by human restrictions and limitations.

Before I close this preface, I would add a few words with a more immediate reference to ministers of the gospel.

Some whose judgment of the calvinistic points is fundamentally the same with that of our author, yet appear to others, and even to themselves, to think very differently. It is no uncommon thing for a man not thoroughly to comprehend his own meaning, till it is luminously and distinctly stated to him. And it is not unlikely that some reputed calvinists, in perusing the following pages, will discover their real sentiments upon the doctrines in question, at once both clearly reflected, and more fully confirmed.

There are others whose judgment is not so much confused as it is unsettled. They have glimpses of truth in some favoured moments which disturb their present system; yet being either unseconded, or opposed, or otherwise influenced by those about them, they are still detained by their old opinions. No one seems more liable than a popular preacher to fall into this inconvenience, which not only will hinder his pursuit of

truth, but also, which is more serious, may tempt him to connive at his past errors, which his followers perhaps have been taught to regard as the tests of orthodoxy. It highly concerns him therefore in such circumstances, to throw aside all partial respects, and diligently to prosecute his views to a conclusion which he will be able to justify to himself: and what is here offered may probably afford him assistance.

To correct wrong opinions that have early been taken up and maintained to the latter period of life, is difficult, and sometimes even hazardous; which will appear strange till we consider, that truth and error, like the wheat and the tares represented in the gospel,\* may become so blended and interwoven, that they must stand or fall together. It is therefore to young preachers, and to those who are intended for the same holy function, that the present work is more particularly addressed. Now they are in that season in which they should *prove all things*, that they may afterwards *hold fast*

\* Matt. xiii.

*that which is good.* Now they should be establishing those principles, by a free and serious enquiry, on which they may safely rest, when by the declining vigour of their faculties, the growing infirmities of age, and the shortness of time, it is too late to be laying foundations. It is true there is great reason for caution, lest under a pretence of liberal disquisition the mind break loose from the needful restraints of modesty and discretion; lest after the example of some free enquirers, we disdain all the lessons of prescriptive wisdom, and set out as fresh adventurers, in quest of truth and of religion. On the other hand, an apprehension of such extravagancies ought not to prevent any man, especially if called to be a teacher, from looking abroad (once in his life at least) beyond particular churches and societies, to those in other countries and ages, comparing them together, and *both* with the laws of nature and revelation. Or if this be too much, let him however consult those authors who have taken this method for him, and avail himself of their light and instructions. Without such helps, a preacher, unless possessed

of extraordinary genius or illumination, instead of being qualified to correct, will himself be involved in the errors and prejudices of the party, in which he happens to be engaged.

Should any good man, out of zeal for what he believes to be truth, bestow his animadversions on this work, he is not likely to meet with any opposition on the part of the editor; whose health, as well as disposition, were his abilities otherwise adequate, will not easily suffer him to enter into controversy: and who thinks it sufficient honour to introduce to the publick, an author who hath so well spoken for himself.

*ELY BATES.*

## PREFACE

TO THE PRESENT EDITION.

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**I**T is now above eighteen years since the much greater part of the following work was first published. During this interval I have not been altogether inattentive to what has passed in the religious world; and on the whole, I am inclined to hope, that a spirit of candour and moderation has increased amongst protestants in general; to which their united endeavours, of late so eminently displayed, to promote the common cause of christianity throughout the world, seem to have not a little contributed, by abating an intemperate zeal for particular opinions. Even

Arminians and Calvinists, who have so long occupied the field of controversy, appear at last to regard each other with a degree of kindness, and to treat the points in difference between them with a temper which was not usual in preceding periods. Encouraged by these favourable omens, I am led to republish the former extracts with some additions, under a strong conviction of their substantial truth and importance, and of their adaptedness to promote the great ends which the pious of both parties have in view. But before we proceed, it may not be impertinent to offer a few preliminary remarks; and in the first place to take some distinct notice of several very different classes of men, who may be induced to look into the present volume.

There are some persons who apply themselves with the same indifference to theology as they would to subjects purely mathematical or philosophical. These may be called the *theoretic* class. They will speculate upon the being and attributes of God, the future destinies of men, and upon other points of natural or revealed religion the most awful and momentous, with no other



interest or concern, than barely to decide upon their truth or falsehood. As if they were creatures made up of pure mind, without heart or affections, or active powers; or as if all knowledge of divine things was not in order to love and obedience, and the felicity of a future state.

If any such readers should be led to a perusal of this little work, I should think it a small matter to gain their assent to every truth it contains, unless at the same time they were made to feel their importance. It is this *feeling* or impression of divine truth from which men naturally shrink, and none perhaps more than those who are distinguished by superiority of intellect.

It is much to be regretted, that readers such as we have now described, should so easily, in this literary age, find authors suited to their taste; authors (some of them at least) of genius, learning, and eloquence; but who, with all these endowments, *for want of a heart*, seldom produce any useful or lasting impression upon their admirers. The author I would now principally recommend is of another order; he has both a

head and a heart, he has both *light* to discern the truth, and *love* to inforce it and set it home upon the consciences of others.

The second class I would notice, consists of those who to speculation add zeal, or who ardently endeavour to promote that scheme of christianity, whatever it may be, which they themselves have adopted. Under this description may be ranked men of very opposite characters; on the one hand, such as bend all their strength to reduce the religion of the bible almost to a bare system of morals, and thus to strip it of its peculiar doctrines; and on the other, such as would strain those doctrines so as to weaken or dissolve all moral obligation. It will easily be perceived that the Socinians and Antinomians are here particularly intended. As the cause of the former derives its chief support from the extravagancies of the latter, the Socinian, by a perusal of the following pages, in which those extravagances are corrected, may be brought to conceive more favourably of that evangelical doctrine, by which the interest he professes to have most at heart, the interest of true virtue and morality, is far more

effectually promoted and secured, than it can be either by the scheme he has himself adopted, or by any other which can possibly be devised. And as the Socinian may be thus helped forward from nature to revelation, and from reason to faith, so may the Antinomian no less profit by a careful perusal of the same pages; they may teach him to distinguish betwixt faith and fancy; betwixt the presumption of spiritual pride or ignorance, and the humble hope arising from a cordial and obedient reception of the gospel of Christ; and instead of the untempered weapons of Dr. Crisp, and his associates, they will provide him with armour of proof in his conflicts with the Socinians or other adversaries of evangelical truth.

Thus may Socinian and Antinomian zealots be brought from opposite extremities to embrace each other on scripture ground, and to unite in one common effort in the defence and propagation of that faith which once they laboured to destroy.

But what shall we say of those who, shunning each of these extremes, are zealous for that gospel which is delivered in the new

testament? Is it not allowable for such men to stand forth, whenever they please, as the avowed friends and advocates of a cause so holy, and so intimately connected with the present and future welfare of mankind? No: it is not allowable, unless their zeal is tempered with the following qualities, without which it can produce no happy effect, and which therefore they will permit me to recal to their attention.

In the first place, *it must be tempered with goodness.* A bad man when he pleads in behalf of truth, to which in his own conduct he discovers no practical regard, is more likely to bring it into contempt, than to promote its reception in the world; whilst he himself may expect to incur both the contempt of men, and the displeasure of heaven. *Unto the wicked, God saith, what hast thou to do to declare my statutes, or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth, seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee.* And a mere heathen will tell us, that even in secular causes, to be a good man, is the

primary requisite of a persuasive orator.

*It must be tempered with charity.* This is a qualifying ingredient in which zeal is often found deficient. Even a good man, in the present imperfect state, may sometimes mistake a fondness for his own notions, or a natural vehemence of temper, for a regard to divine truth; and when this is the case, as every opposition he meets with will be sure to produce a degree of irritation, he may at length, without due precaution, degenerate into a peevish disputant, or a little angry reformer; characters justly odious even in common or civil life, and must be infinitely more so when they appear under the profession of an advocate for the gospel of peace. *The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves. The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.*

Lastly, *it must be tempered with prudence.* If in plans merely of a political or civil nature, no success can reasonably be expected, without a due regard to persons

and circumstances, it would be still more unreasonable, without such regard, to expect success in plans of moral or religious instruction.

When Christ appeared as the great teacher and regenerator of the world, he did not make an immediate disclosure of all the mysteries and doctrines of his spiritual kingdom; he taught his disciples *as they were able to bear it*; and referred to the approaching and more perfect dispensation which commenced at the day of Pentecost, many things which they were not prepared to receive under his personal ministry. In the spirit of this great example, the apostle Paul, *To the Jews became as a Jew, that he might gain the Jews; he considered himself as a debtor to the Greek and to the Barbarian, to the wise and to the unwise; he made himself all things to all men, that by all means he might gain some.*

To the Corinthians he says, I have fed you with milk and not with strong meat; for hitherto ye were unable to bear it. In these instances. (to which many others might easily be added,) we see truth in conjunction

with prudence as well as with charity; and adapting itself with an admirable condescension to the capacities and circumstances, and even to the weaknesses and prejudices of men.

From these brief remarks, it may be collected, that it is far from the design of the present publication, to excite or countenance an intemperate zeal, though for truth itself; or to oppose prevailing errors at the expence of piety, charity, or prudence.

The last class I would notice consists of those, *who seem determined to adhere to established creeds, or the received doctrines of the particular church to which they belong, whatever may be advanced to the contrary.* Before the era of the reformation, the spirit of free enquiry, and the right of private judgment, were greatly checked, if not entirely suppressed, by the tyranny of the church of Rome, which, by claiming exclusively, both the custody and interpretation of the scriptures, brought the laity into a slavish subjection to the priesthood, and thus reduced a great part of Christendom, to a state of deplorable ignorance and supersti-

tion. In this extremity, Luther appeared, and by his heroical exertions, restored to the people the free use of scripture, excited a spirit of enquiry, and established the right of private judgment, in defiance of popes and councils, and of every human authority whatsoever. This emancipation from intellectual and spiritual oppression, however happy in its general effects, has, like other advantages in the hands of such a creature as man, been often attended with serious inconveniences. It has led many so to abound in their own sense, as to refuse all deference to the judgment of the greatest doctors, or of the most venerable assemblies; and thus to confound the gravest and most legitimate authorities, with the most wild and tyrannic usurpations. In conclusion it has generated a schismatical spirit, which has divided or separated churches, and often disturbed the commonwealth. When these evils began to discover themselves, when it was found that every ignorant and conceited religionist was forward to erect himself into a teacher, and rudely to set aside every opinion which happened to cross his own; the more sober pro-



testants, to give a check to this arrogant humour, thought proper to renew the appeal to human authority; and this appeal, within certain limits is undoubtedly both just and expedient. But if we plead the authority of our reformers, as the papists plead the authority of the more ancient fathers and doctors; if we substitute Luther and Calvin, for Austin and Aquinas, and the synod of Dort, for the council of Trent; then is authority made to trench on free enquiry and the right of private judgment; the great principle of protestantism is deserted; and we return to a species of mitigated popery.

How far this is the case with those good men amongst ourselves, who will scarce allow the least dissent from the doctrines of the reformation, as contained in the articles and homilies of our church, may be worthy their consideration. For although the reformation, viewed in its proper light, deserves to be celebrated as one of the greatest and happiest events recorded in the history of the world; yet still it is the work of man; and that any man, or any number of men uninspired, however otherwise gifted and dis-

tinguished, should be able to *strike out*, and this too as it were *at one heat*, and in the midst of contention, a system of religious doctrine, so complete and unexceptionable, as to preclude a modest liberty of future dissent or discussion, is more than can reasonably be supposed.

If then we wish to derive from Luther and Calvin, and other great men who have appeared in the same cause, all the advantage which they are capable of affording us, let us not place them in the chair of infallibility, or tread servilely in their steps, but rather by a liberal imitation, seek truth, as they did, by a recurrence to its proper sources. The way to excel in any merely human science, is not barely to copy, but to emulate those who are already proficient. Luther and Calvin were no servile copyists; they looked beyond the reasonings and decisions of fathers and councils, to the perfect models exhibited in scripture, and by these endeavoured to form their own doctrine. May we go and do likewise.

My intention in these last observations is to obviate a prejudice that may arise in

the minds of some readers, when they find in the ensuing pages, certain statements of doctrine, which are not perfectly agreeable to the reformed standard. In such instances I would gladly persuade them to examine well before they decide ; and not to yield to Luther and Calvin that implicit deference, which they themselves denied to those who had gone before them. Far be it from any protestant to withhold from them that respect to which they are entitled, both on account of their personal character, and of the great advantages we have derived from them ; let them be respected, and respected highly, for their piety, their learning, and their *work's sake* ; but let them be respected as men who, like others were subject to imperfection, and who, though they did much, left something still to be done.

It is now nearly three centuries since the commencement of the reformation in Germany ; and doubtless so long a period has afforded many scattered lights, which if brought together, might serve to advance the protestant faith still nearer to the scripture standard. But as this is a work that would require great learning and judgment,

it is not likely to be soon accomplished ; and therefore, in the mean time, it may be well to get all the help we can from those distinguished individuals, who, in opposition to the errors and prejudices of their forefathers, have appeared as the instructors of the age in which they lived. In this number may fairly be ranked, in the opinion of the best judges, the author from whom the present extract is chiefly taken. The philosophical and pious Bishop Wilkins, spoke of him as one “ who had cultivated every subject which he handled ; and that if he had lived in the primitive times, he had been one of the fathers of the church.” Dr. Barrow, a man no less eminent, observes, “ that his practical writings were never mended, and his controversial ones seldom confuted.” And the excellent Mr. Boyle, to show how much he was qualified to sustain the character of a public instructor, remarks that “ he feared no man’s displeasure, nor hoped for any man’s perferment.”

After such testimonies in favour of RICHARD BAXTER, I would hope that no reader, whatever may be the size of his un-

derstanding, will refuse to lend him a patient hearing, especially when he is told, that what is here offered contains the result of his best thoughts and enquiries, and upon subjects which are confessedly of the greatest importance.

Mr. Baxter, was, as is well known, a very voluminous writer; and a man who writes much, and at different periods, can hardly avoid sometimes falling into real or apparent inconsistency or contradiction; besides, he was a vehement lover of peace, and by his endeavours to reconcile jarring opinions, might appear occasionally to some, to have no decided judgment of his own. But with every abatement on the score of human imperfection, he was undoubtedly a great and a good man, a practical writer, as Dr. Barrow observes, of the very first order, a most strenuous and successful opposer of Antinomian error, and on this account deserving to be ranked among the reformers of the church; and on the whole, seems to have approached as nearly to primitive christianity as any man since the era of the reformation.

Of Bishop Stillingfleet I shall only observe here, that he was held in such high repute even by the dissenters of his time, that they appealed to him as an arbitrator in the controversy which had arisen amongst them, on account of the Antinomian writings of Dr. Crisp; and that the following extracts from him, are taken from his replies on that occasion.

The largest extract next to that from Mr. Baxter, is taken from a letter to Mr. Boyle by the Rev. John Howe, written at the particular request of that truly eminent christian philosopher, which may give it an additional title to the reader's attention. This was published in the former edition. Perhaps some may prefer it to the extract from Mr. Baxter; and certainly it discovers a calmness and comprehension of thought extremely uncommon, and may be justly considered as a master-piece in its kind. Such are the authors to whom I have had recourse in compiling this little work, which however humble in its appearance, contains I think some lights which, if duly improved,

would contribute to the greater purity and extension of the protestant faith.

Still I am aware, that as many real friends to their country look with jealousy on whatever has the appearance of innovation in the state; so many truly pious men regard in like manner every similar appearance in the church. Such a jealousy however when carried to excess, is a great hinderance to improvement; as by endeavouring to suppress a bold innovating spirit, which generally breeds nothing but error and confusion, it gives an unhappy check to that temperate and enlightened zeal, which seeks to promote the cause of religious truth, with a due regard to persons and circumstances, and to the good order of society both ecclesiastical and civil. And though, in late times, we have seen a spirit of anti-reformation go forth, and daring attempts made, by stripping christianity of its mysteries, to reduce it down to Socinianism and mere natural religion; even this ought not to provoke a good man to the use of any other methods in opposition, than those which truth and charity may dictate; among which none perhaps will be found

more effectual, than such seasonable and temperate reforms as may serve to repair and strengthen the fortress of our common faith, and thus deprive the enemy of any advantage he might think to obtain from an attack on its weak or indefensible parts.

There certainly have been very few periods in which such precaution was more necessary than at present, or in which a good christian was called upon more imperatively to be provided for his just defence, and in readiness *to give a reason of the hope that is in him*. Formerly he might be assailed, though but seldom, by some conceited man called a philosopher; now he is exposed daily to a host of adversaries, commonly known under the style and character of critics. By what means this change has been produced among us, is sufficiently obvious. Besides our professed reviews, there is scarce a periodical publication in which there is not a critical department, where some self-commissioned judge mounts his tribunal, and calls before him every cause, both human and divine. In this way a critical spirit has spread itself through the land; the place



of the learner is deserted, and almost every man, woman, and child, arrogates a censorial authority. This state of things is evidently attended with much danger, and the prudent christian will meet it accordingly. Like a skilful general he will take care that in the choice of his ground he is not commanded by the enemy, and that the forces he employs are tried and effective. Or in plainer language, he will not extend his defence beyond the boundaries of divine truth, or employ any arguments which are either false or irrelevant. He will carefully distinguish between divine mysteries and doctrines, and those merely human notions, and erroneous or uncertain comments, which are sometimes confounded with them; and while he maintains the one with his utmost ability, he will abandon the other without a contest. And thus, by the blessing of heaven, he may be able, not only to make good his own defence, but also to make a serious impression upon opponents.

Upon these principles, the author I recommend, proceeds in the ensuing observations. By clearing the doctrines of faith and justification, of redemption and grace,

from the misconstructions with which they have often been perplexed and obscured; and shewing that, by their correspondence to the nature and state of man, they are agreeable to reason, as well as to scripture, he obviates the chief objections that have been raised against them; and thus greatly facilitates their reception by all those who oppose them merely under an apprehension of their being unreasonable or unintelligible.

That there are many such opposers amongst ourselves is I think very probable; men who, having never seen the doctrines above specified but under a distorted representation, have been led to regard them with a degree of aversion, by resolving the cause into the mistake, and confounding the truth of the text with the error or obscurity of the comment. Should any such take up this volume, I would hope, that by a calm and serious perusal, it may serve to rectify their judgment, and so preserve them from the extreme danger of rejecting some of the most important articles of our faith, on account of the errors with which they may have been

associated, or the obscurity in which they have been involved.

No one I hope will do me the injustice to imagine that, in what I have last said, there is any design to lower the mysteries or doctrines of christianity, or to sacrifice the least portion of divine truth, to the pride of the human understanding, or the corruption of the human heart. All that I would mean is, that a proper line of distinction should be drawn between human and divine, between the mysteries and doctrines of men and those of God; and that we should refuse to the former that homage which is due only to the latter.

When this is done, the gospel will no longer be made to bear a cloudy or malignant aspect towards a great part of mankind:

As when the sun,  
Looks through the horizontal misty air,  
Shorn of his beams; or from behind the moon,  
In dim eclipse, disastrous twilight sheds  
On half the nations.

It will, on the contrary, appear and be

welcomed *as a morning without clouds, when the sun goeth forth in his might*; and then may the commencement of that glorious period, predicted by the prophets, be expected, when the Messiah shall be at once *a light to lighten the gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel*; when the church shall be commensurate with the world; *and all flesh shall see the salvation of God.*

For effecting this universal spread of the gospel, there seems to be many happy preparations in the present circumstances of the world, and perhaps in no country more than in our own. The great attention which of late years has been given to the education of children, so far at least as may enable them to read their bibles, and the wide dispersion of many valuable religious tracts, cannot fail to diffuse divine knowledge more generally amongst us. And if we view this country in relation to the rest of the globe, we see a missionary spirit gone forth to an extent before unexampled among protestants; and societies instituted, one in particular, by whose magnanimous exertions it is probable, that in no distant period, the scriptures will

be circulated through all nations, and in all languages. And should these efforts be duly sustained and promoted by the ministry of truly evangelical teachers, enlightened with apostolic doctrine, and animated with apostolic zeal, nothing more can be wanting, so far as means and instruments are concerned, for the conversion of the whole world.

*BLACKHEATH,*  
*August 13, 1811.*

*The reader is desired to make allowance for a few small  
typographical errors.*







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## *Observations, &c.*

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### Sec. 1.

**G**OD the free Creator, Lord and benefactor of the world, was pleased to make his creatures of various ranks; among the rational to make man a free self-determining agent, not fixed by necessity in love and obedience, but left with a power of loving and obeying, which he could use or not; that so he might be a fit subject of God's moral government in this world, in order to a more fixed state of holiness and happiness in another. Not but that angelical confirmation had been better for us: but it pleased not God to compose the universe of creatures only of the noblest order

Though God exerciseth only a moral operation upon this world of free agents, it is not any dishonour to his will or power as if he could do no more;

but it is his delight thus to govern the creature according to the nature and rank he hath made it in ; and his non-volitions and non-operations of a higher sort, are agreeable to his perfection, wisdom and liberty ; higher actions being used on higher creatures.

Yet hath God placed and kept these free agents, not only under his moral government, but also under his dominion and disposal : so that he will do with them as his own, what he list, and none shall frustrate his disposing will.

It pleased him first to make man perfect under a law of perfection, making innocency, or perfection, the only condition of life, and the contrary of death.

When man had sufficient grace to have kept this law, not sufficient to ascertain the event, but sufficient power to have stood, he broke it, and sinned against that sufficient grace, before God either denied or withdrew from him any necessary assistance or support.

From whence it is clear that the nature of man's will is such, as that it is made to use a power which doth not necessitate, and that it is no defying of the will, nor extolling it above its nature to say, that it can act or determine itself, without God's determining premotion ; or by that same measure of help, which at another time doth not determine it. Though its nature, and its act as

such be of God, yet so is its liberty too; and therefore by the power and liberty given by God, the will can act or not act, turn itself to this object or to that, without more help than the said natural support and concourse: and this power and liberty is its nature, and God's image.

From hence also it is evident that there is such a thing as grace necessary called sufficient, which is not effectual. For God took no grace away from Adam before he sinned, nor let out any temptation upon him which he was not able to resist; nor did he sin for want of necessary grace; but by that same degree of help might have overcome.

There are few who dare say, that God is not able to make a free agent with power to choose or refuse without God's further determining pre-motion. And if God can do it, we have no reason to debase his work, and think he did not.

For God to make a self-determining agent that shall act without his predetermination, is but to put forth his own active power with limitation or suspension, that is, to will and act, or operate, so far and no further.

And this restriction of the divine operation is not from any finiteness of his power, as if he could do no more, but from the freedom of his will, and the conduct of his wisdom, who seeth it good to do no more.

And all divines agree, that God doth not act

to the extent of his power as natural agents do ; for instance, God doth not make as many men or other creatures as he could ; nor doth he make every man as wise or happy as he could : now all that is undone which God could do, all possibles which are not existent or future, tell us plainly that God doth freely suspend the action or operation of his power, totally as to them : which is much more than to suspend it but in part with free agents, and to give them a natural self determining power, without further predetermination of them. If all creation and providence tells us that he hath the far greater suspension, why should we think the less absurd.

And reason telleth us, that as the beauty of a system consists partly in its variety, so God hath fitly beautified the universe by a middle rank of creatures, that stand between confirmed angels, and the brutes, viz. intellectual free agents, left to a natural power of free chusing or refusing without necessitation, in the midst of various objects, to prepare them by trial for a better state.

## Sec. 2.

GOD passing sentence on fallen man for sin, would not forgive him the temporal death, nor common calamities of this life, but cursed the creatures which he was to use, as part of his penalty : but the great evil which sin brought on

man was, the loss of God's approbation and complacency, of his Spirit's saving communion and help, of God's image on man's soul, and also his right to life eternal: all which man's own sin cast away, and he was both the criminal and executioner without any change in God. Man having thus cast away his innocency, could beget a child no holier or better than himself, for he could not communicate that which he had lost, so that our nature is vitiated with original sin, and unhappy in the miserable effects.

When God judged man for sin, at the same time he promised him a Saviour, and through him as promised, made a new law of grace with man.

This law giveth pardon of the spiritual and eternal punishment, and of all save what was excepted in the sentence pronounced, Gen. iii. but pardon not to be absolutely and immediately received, but by degrees and upon certain terms; and with pardon a free gift of life, spiritual and eternal, on the said conditions.

The promise, Gen. iii. 15. is plain as to mercy and salvation, and darker as to the promised seed and his mediation; and dark as to the condition on man's part: but it is probable that Adam had it more explained to him, than those short words make it to us: but this is clear, that by this new covenant God becometh man's merciful Redeemer

and Pardoner, and Ruler on terms of grace in order to recovery and salvation; and that man was to believe in God as such, and accordingly to devote himself in covenant to him.

This law or covenant was made with all mankind in Adam; for all were in his loins; and God hath given us no more proof that the first covenant was made with Adam as the father of mankind, than that the second was so made.

God's dealings with mankind are a certain confirmation of this truth, and an exposition and promulgation of this law and covenant of grace as extended to all mankind. For God doth not use them according to the rigour of the violated law of innocency, but giveth them abundant mercies and means which tend to their repentance and recovery, and obligeth them all to believe that he is merciful and their case not desperate, and to repent and use such means and mercies in order to their return to him. There are no nations in the world that even to this day are not under such mercies, means and obligations; and therefore none that are left as the devils in despair, under the unremedied covenant of innocency alone.

But though the law of grace made to Adam be that which the world was then put under, and to be ruled by, and the tenor of it extended to all mankind, yet those that would partake of the blessings of it, were to consent to it as covenanters with

God, and to believe in and obey God the Redeemer, Pardoner, and Restorer, in the thankful sense of all this mercy ; which because the ungodly did not, they and their posterity fell under a double guilt and curse, both as violaters of the law of innocency and of grace, and therefore incurred a special penalty : Cain and his offspring being first separated from the people of God, and at last the whole world, except eight persons, perishing in the deluge.

Noah with his house being saved to be the root of all mankind that should succeed him, God renewed with him, and mankind in him, the same law or covenant of grace which he had made with us in Adam with some additions ; to shew us that though the wicked and their seed had forfeited the benefits of it, yet the covenant was not altered, but stood in its first sense in force to all, and would pardon and save all true consenters.

Ham for his transgression brought a new curse on himself and posterity, besides the mere fruit of Adam's sin. So that though God altered not his law of grace, yet they became a cursed generation.

By multiplied transgressions, the sons of men did still more degenerate and revolt from God, till Nimrod and others by their wickedness brought down the new and grievous penalty of a confusion of language, the great hinderance of the propa-

gation of the truth to this day ; and at last the greater part fell to idolatry, not knowing the true God, and were given up to sensuality and wickedness.

Abraham being faithful, and escaping the idolatry and wickedness of the world, was eminently favoured and beloved of God, and believing and trusting God in his promises and in the great trial of his son, is honoured with the name of the Father of the Faithful ; and God renewed with him the covenant of grace which he had made to all men in Adam and Noah, with special application to his comfort ; and added a peculiar promise to him, that his seed should be a holy nation chosen out of all the world to God, and that of him the Messiah should come ; of both which promises, the common and the special, circumcision was a seal.

Yet this was no repealing of the law of grace which had been made to all the world, nor was it an excommunicating or rejecting of all others, or a confining of God's grace and church to him and his posterity alone ; but only an exalting them above all others in these peculiar dignities and privileges. For at that time holy Shem was living, and long after, who in all likelihood was a King ; and its probable that others of his posterity and some of Japhet's did not fall away from God : and Melchizedek being a righteous prince, and priest of the most high God, was a great type of Christ's



heavenly priesthood, and therefore probably had some subjects that feared and worshipped God. The scripture giving us the history of the Jewish nation and affairs, as the principal, and taking little notice of the rest of the world, we cannot know by it the exact state of all other nations, nor what true worshippers of God might be among them. But the history of Job and his friends; the probability that all the children of Ishmael, of Keturah, of Esau, forsook not God (for they were circumcised and therefore were covenanters) with the case of Ninevah afterwards; and Abraham's thoughts that even Sodom had at least fifty righteous persons in it, &c. assureth us that the Jews were not God's only church, but a peculiar people, and a nation holy above the rest. And as the covenant of grace was still the governing law to the rest of world, though most rejected it by rebellion, so it is not to be thought that none consented to it and were faithful.

The special promise to Abraham of the Messiah to be his seed, as it belonged not to mankind in general, so was it not promulgated or made known to them, but only to the Jews, and the few that conversed with them. Therefore the rest of the world, were not obliged to know and believe it.

What conditions of pardon and life were then necessary to all mankind in general, is most probably gathered out of these texts of scripture, Exod.

xxxiv. 6, 7. *And the Lord proclaimed the name of the Lord, the Lord God merciful and gracious, long suffering and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, transgression and sin, and that will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children, and to the children's children unto the third and fourth generation.* This is the description of God given by his own mouth, as he is to be believed in, and as they were to be subject and devoted to him. And Heb. xi. 6. *Without faith it is impossible to please God; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him.* Acts x. 34, 35. *Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him.*

The belief of the pardoning mercy of God to the penitent, and the recoverable state of souls, and that men ought to repent and seek pardon and mercy of God, in order to salvation, in opposition to despair and neglect of all endeavours for recovery, is so common to all mankind, that though self-love may make them hope inordinately for that which they would have to be true, yet it is most apparent that it proceedeth from some natural notion of God, and is to be numbered with the

*notitiæ communes* ; which are past controversy with all mankind.

Therefore though the law of innocency was the law of nature in the first and eminent sense, yet this common notice of God's pardoning mercy, and man's duty to repent, hope and seek salvation, may well be called the law of lapsed nature, as the other is the law of innocent nature ; and the course of natural providence running so much in the way of restoring mercy, certifies mankind of the aforesaid hopes and duties.

That which is called the covenant of nature or innocency, was in the main the very law of innocent nature in all the parts of it. Nature being perfect, revealed man's duty perfectly to obey. Nature declared punishment to be due to sin ; yea to all sin : and this punishment to be suitable to the nature of the offender, compared with the God offended, and the injury done. Nature telleth man, that God who made his soul a simple intellectual spirit, intended not to annihilate it ; and that its noble faculties, fitted to know God, and love him, and live to him perfectly in immortality, were made for this, and not in vain. So that this covenant depends not alone upon supernatural revelation.

But that which nature revealeth about the penalty, is not that God of necessity must punish the loss of innocency as highly as he may do : but

that he may justly punish the sinner in rigour, by temporal, spiritual and eternal miseries. And that the ends of government, require, that sin escape not free, but some exemplary punishment be a vindication of God, and a warning to man : which our death, afflictions, and spiritual sufferings manifest in part, and the sufferings of Christ more fully.

### Sec. 3.

IN *the fulness of time God sent his Son made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, Rom. iv. 4. But not them only ; for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. John iii. 16. He is the Saviour of the world, and the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but for the sins of the whole world, 1 John ii. 2. He tasted death for every man, Heb. ii. Being the Saviour of all men, but especially of those that believe, 1 Tim. iv. 10.*

As the eternal word and wisdom of the Father in his divine nature only, was the interposing Redeemer by engagement, before his incarnation, and governed the fallen world by the foredescribed

law of grace ; so upon his own incarnation, initially, and upon his performance, plenarily, all things were delivered into his hands. *All power in heaven and earth was given him*, Matth. xxvi. 19. John xiii. 1, 3. and xvii. 2, 3. *All judgment was committed to him* ; John v. 22, 23, 24, 25. *He hath made him head over all things to his church*, Eph. i. 22, 23. *And for this end he died, rose and revived, that he might be the Lord of the dead and living*, Rom. xiv. 9, 10. *For God hath exalted him and given him a name above every name, that in the name of Jesus every knee shall bow*, Phil. ii. 7, 8.

Christ upon his incarnation performed but what God had decreed before the foundation of the world, and had obscurely and generally promised after the fall, at the first making of the covenant of grace. Which decree of God is, after the manner of men, called by some a covenant between the Father and the Son ; especially because the prophets have sometimes, as Isa. ch. liii. described it, as a covenant between the Father and Christ incarnate. If we conceive of it properly under the notion of a decree and a promise afterwards, then the will and mercy of God the Father and Son, with the Holy Spirit, are to be considered as the cause of man's redemption, pardon and salvation, even the fundamental principal cause : and the promise was man's se-

curity ; and Christ as promised was the primary great means, which was to procure us the rest, by doing that, upon the foresight and foredecree whereof, God did before-hand pardon and save sinners. But if you had rather mention it as in the form of a covenant, which before the coming of Christ, must be improperly taken, being only of God to himself, or a promise of and to Christ in view of his incarnation, then the undertaking of the Father, and the Son herein must be carefully distinguished and described. The Father giveth up to Christ as Redeemer the whole lapsed world, and promised to accept his sacrifice and performance, and to make him head over all things to his church, and by him to establish the law of grace, in its perfect edition, and to give him the government respectively of the church and world, and to glorify him for this work with himself for ever. And the second person undertaketh to assume man's nature, to do and suffer all that he did, in perfect obedience to his father's will, and law of redemption.

Christ did not take upon him strictly and properly the natural or civil person of any sinner, much less of all the elect, or all sinners : but the person of a mediator between God and sinners.

Christ was not our delegate, deputy, minister, or instrument to do what he did in our names,

by representing our persons ; as a man's servant payeth his master's debt by his command, or doth some work which he was to do by himself or by another.

Yet did he in the person of a mediator, voluntarily as part of his mediatorial work, suffer the penalty in our stead : not by a full representation of our persons ; nor as if we could hence truly say, that we did in a legal sense, suffer in Christ, or satisfy God's justice ourselves by Christ ; nor that God, or the Redeemer, do reckon it to us, or ever will, to be a thing done by us in our own civil person, though by Christ's natural person ; nor will ever give us all the fruits of it, on that reason and account, as supposing us so by Christ to have satisfied for, or redeemed ourselves. But he suffered in the stead and place of sinners, to satisfy God's wisdom, truth, and justice, and to procure pardon and life for sinners, to be given out by himself, on his terms and in his way. Much less did Christ in our person, and we in him and by him, in a civil sense, become habitually holy, and perfectly fulfil all righteousness ; nor doth God ever repute us to have ourselves, in our civil persons, thus fulfilled the law, and been holy in and by Christ, or will justify us on such a supposition.

Christ is said to be made sin for us, in that he was made a sacrifice for sin ; but never was a

sinner indeed, or in God's esteem ; for God judgeth not falsely : nor did he ever take to himself the guilt of fact, or fault in itself, but the punishment ; and the guilt only in relation to punishment ; the *reatum pœnæ, non culpæ qua talis*. Christ never undertook to be reputed of God one that was truly and formally wicked or a sinner ; but only one that was a sponsor, who consented to suffer for sinners, that they might be delivered. And they are ill words of them that say, Christ was by imputation the greatest sinner in the world ; though such men may mean well, it were better to speak in the scripture phrase, and not so far overgo it.

Had God imputed our sins so to him as to have esteemed him literally a sinner, God must necessarily from the perfection of his nature, have hated him as a wicked enemy ; yea more than he hated any other man, as being guilty of a world of wickedness ; whereas God was still well pleased with him, and never hated him.

The satisfaction which Christ made to the justice of God was full and perfect ; and so was his merit by his perfect righteousness.

The perfection of Christ's satisfaction consisteth not in its being in stead of all the sufferings due to all for whom he died, so that none should be ever due to the persons themselves. For death, afflictions, the want of grace, and



withholding of the Spirit's further help, &c. must be suffered even by the elect: but it consisteth in its full sufficiency to those ends for which it was designed by the Father and the Son.

The very nature and reason of the satisfactoriness of Christ's sufferings, was not that they were the very same, either in kind or in degree, which were due to all for whom he suffered; for they were not such.

They could not be the same which were due by the law: 1st, For these were due to the sinner himself, and another's suffering for him, fulfilleth not the law which never said "either thou or another for thee shall die," but only satisfied the law-giver as he is above his own law, and could dispense with it, his justice being satisfied and saved. 2. Sin itself, though not as sin, was the greatest part of the sinner's punishment. 3. The immediate unavoidable consequences resulting from sin itself, were punishments which Christ did never undergo; as to be hateful, or displeasing to God, to be related as criminal, to lose all right to God's favour and kingdom, &c. 4. None of the further punishments which supposed real faultiness could be found on Christ; as the torment of an accusing conscience for rejecting and offending God, or the sense of God's hatred, &c. 5. Much less the desertions of the spirit of holiness, to be left in a state of sin, and to hate

God for his purity and justice, which will be the case of the damned. The blind zeal of them that think they wrong the sufferings of Christ, if they make them not thus of the same kind with all that we deserved, doth lead them to the intolerable blaspheming of our Saviour, which if understood, they would themselves abhor.

Yet did Christ suffer more in soul than in body, being for the time deprived of that kind of sense of God's love and joy therein, which was no part of his holiness or perfection ; and having on his soul the deep sense of God's displeasure with sinners and of his hatred of sin, though no sense of God's hatred to himself. For it is conceivable how Christ being sponsor for sinners, and undertaking to suffer as a sacrifice for their sins, and in their stead, might have on his own soul the sense of God's hatred of sin and wrath against sinners, though not properly terminated on himself ; and so he bore the sorrow of our transgressions, and was so far forsaken of God for that time, and not further.

The true reason of the satisfactoriness of Christ's sufferings was, that they were a most apt means for the demonstration of the governing justice, holiness, wisdom and mercy of God, by which God could attain the ends of his law and government, better then by executing the law on the world in its destruction.

The measure of the satisfaction made by Christ was, that it was a full *salvo* to God's justice, and demonstration of it; that he might give pardon and life to sinners, upon the new terms of the covenant of grace.

The matter of Christ's meritorious righteousness, was his perfect fulfilling the law given him as a Mediator, or the performance of the conditions of his mediatorial covenant: from which resulted the merit and dueness of all the benefits which God has promised in that covenant to Christ, though mostly for men. This was the righteousness of Christ for man, and hence rose his merit for us.

What the law of redemption required of him was, 1. That he should by perfect holiness fulfil the first law of nature or innocency which Adam broke: not precisely as it obliged Adam, in every point, but as it was common to man, and belonging to Christ as man. 2. That he should fulfil all the law of Moses given only to the Jews. 3. That he should perform the great things peculiar to himself as mediator.

That Christ did not fulfil all the law in our persons is further evident, in that he did not all the duties which the law bound us to perform, and for not doing of which we are truly sinners. He did not any of the proper offices of a father to children; of a servant to a master; of a ma-

gistrate, &c. Besides the personal laws given to Adam in Paradise, to Noah, to Abraham, to David, to Solomon, the prophets, and others. Christ did not these things for them, nor did they fulfil these particular laws in him.

The disputes whether it be Christ's divine, his habitual, his active, or his passive righteousness, that is made ours to our justification, seem to be but the offspring of the mistaken notion of Christ's personating or representing us in his righteousness: and the parcelling out the uses and effects, viz. that one is imputed to us instead of habitual righteousness, another instead of actual, and the third pardoneth our sins, &c. It is well that they suppose not that his divine righteousness is imputed to our deification. But the case is plain, that Christ's whole human righteousness, habitual, active and passive, are meritorious for us, as being the parts of that one righteousness of Christ as mediator, which consisteth in the full performance of the law of redemption, or of his own covenant with his Father, undertaken for our sakes. Having been, and done, and suffered what he promised, he is righteous; and his divine righteousness, by virtue of the hypostatical union, dignifieth his human to its meritorious value.

## Sec. 4.

There are three sorts of operations of the Holy Ghost, one common and two proper, to them that shall have, or already have justification.

The first is preparing common grace, which maketh men fitter for special grace, which yet they may have that perish.

The second is that grace of the Spirit by which we perform the first act of special faith and repentance, which goeth before any special habit, but not before any holy seed; because the very influx of the Spirit on the soul is as a *seed* which exciteth the first act before a habit, though not ordinarily before some preparations. This faith is commanded us as our duty first, and made necessary to us, as the condition of the covenant; and when we know it to be thus required of us, and hear in the gospel the reasons which should persuade us, then the Holy Spirit moveth us by his influx to believe and consent, where God and man are conjunct agents; but man subordinate to God.

The third sort is the Spirit's operation of the habit of divine love, and all other graces in the soul, which is called his in-dwelling and sanctification; this is that gift of the Spirit which is promised to believers; to this, faith is the condition.

But yet though some degree of the Spirit be presently given to every believer, it is usually but a spark at first; and there are further means and conditions appointed us for the increase, and actual helps from day to day; and he that will not wait on the Spirit in the use of those means, doth forfeit his help according to his neglect.

Hence it is, that most, if not all christians, have lower measures of the Spirit than otherwise they might have, and that judicially as a punishment for sin; however God is free herein, and if he please may give more even to them that forfeit it.

This covenant of grace, being a conditional pardon of all the world, is universal in the tenor or sense of it; it is of all mankind without exception that Christ saith, *If thou confess with thy mouth, and believe in thy heart, thou shalt be saved*: no person in the world is antecedently excluded.

And as to the promulgation of it, Christ hath commissioned his ministers to preach this gospel to all the world, and to every creature; so that to the utmost of their power they are to offer and publish it to the whole world; and princes and people are all bound in their several places to assist them, and to help to propagate the gospel throughout all the earth.

Those nations which despise and refuse the gospel are justly deprived of it, penally for that rejection.

As God in all ages hath visited the sins of the fathers on the children, as the instances of Cain, Ham, Nimrod, and others plainly shew; so may he justly deal by the posterity of the despisers of the gospel, in denying it them; though he may freely give it the unworthy when he pleaseth.

All the rest of the world who have not the gospel, and the covenant of grace in the last edition, are left by Christ in as good a state at least, if not better, than he found them in at his incarnation. He took away no mercy from them, which they had.

Therefore no man is now condemned for original sin alone; though it is pardoned to no man, till he perform the condition of the pardoning covenant. For God having brought all men under terms of mercy tending to recovery, they shall be judged as they use that recovering mercy, according to that law of grace which they are under, whether of the first or of the last edition.

I was wont in my ignorance to object against the universal tenor of the new covenant, that God excluded some at the first making of it, under the name of the seed of the serpent:

but no scripture giveth us the least ground to think that men equally guilty, are some distinguished as the seed of the serpent, and others as the seed of the woman, merely from God's own will or decree, without any real difference in the persons. For if the image of Satan in original sin, were it that denominated the seed of the serpent, then all the world should be excluded, because all bear that image before they are regenerate; therefore it is plain, that it is not mere original sin that denominateth any the serpent's seed, in the sense of that text, but a consequent rejection and opposition of the Mediator, or grace of the new covenant.

#### Sec. 5.

BY what hath been said, it appeareth how far Christ may be said to have died for all. Certainly all that Christ giveth to all, he procur'd for all by his death: whatever we say of conditional intentions, he certainly intended to give all that he giveth. But all these following particulars are given by Christ, either to all, or to more than the elect.

The human nature, common to all, is advanced and brought nigh to God, in Christ's incarnation. Christ's sacrifice for sin, is so far satisfactory and meritorious for all men, as that



they render Christ a meet object for that faith in him which is commanded, and no man shall be damned for want of the satisfactoriness of Christ's sacrifice, or for want of a Saviour to die for him, and fulfil all righteousness, but only for the abusing or refusing of his mercy.

All men are his subjects by obligation, as he is the Redeemer, and so are under his healing government. A clearer revelation of life and immortality is made by him, even to those that perish; and they have far greater helps than else they would have had, to set their hearts on a better world. Especially a law of grace is made by Christ for all the world; in the last edition, to all that hear the gospel, and in the first, to all the rest, by the promise of which, as by an act of oblivion, or instrument of donation, God hath enacted and given a full pardon of sin to all mankind, with reconciliation, adoption, and right to Christ and Heaven, on condition of their acceptance of it, as offered them. So that men are pardoned and justified if they will believe, and not unthankfully reject their mercies. Apostles, and ordinary ministers, were appointed to preach this gospel to all the world, and make the offer of Christ and life to all men without exception. The execution of the violated law of innocency is forborn to all men, in the greatest part; judgments kept off; and they kept out of

hell, while they have time and means to work out their salvation. Many and great mercies which signify God's goodness, and lead towards repentance, are given to all the world; even mercies forfeited by sins against the law of innocency, and given by the grace of our Redeemer.

It is made all men's duty to believe the revelation made to them, to repent, to accept more mercy, and to seek their own salvation; and such duty is not a small mercy; he hath recorded his word and grace in the holy scriptures, which all are allowed to use for their good. He hath left his excellent example to the world, which greatly tendeth to man's conviction and salvation.

Sin hath a sting to the flesh itself, and is made such a misery to sinners, even in this life, as may much tend to alienate and deter them from it. And the world in general is made such a palpable vanity, and smart vexation, as tendeth to drive men to look out for a better, and not to love it above God.

Lastly, There are certain internal motions and strivings of the Spirit of Christ, which he commonly vouchsafeth men in some degree, and which stimulate conscience to do its office; and which if men will but so far yield to as they can, have a tendency to their recovery. All these

and various other means and mercies, Christ giveth to all, or to more than the elect.

It being certain Christ so far died for all, as to procure them all such benefits as he giveth them, the question remaining is, whether it be a fit phrase to say that *Christ died for all?* and this is put out of question by the scripture, which frequently useth it. We may well speak as God ordinarily there speaketh.

The particle *for*, when we question whether Christ died for all, is ambiguous: 1. It may mean the strict representasion of the persons of all, so that they may be said to have died or satisfied in and by him, legally in their own persons, though not naturally. And thus Christ died not, for all or for any man: which yet is in some men's conceits, who thence say that Christ died not for all, because he did not so personate all. 2. It may signify, to die by the procurement of all men's sins, as the assumed meritorious cause. And thus Pareus himself, in his *Irenicon*, saith, "that the sins of all men lay on Christ; and so he died for all, that is for all men's sins as the cause of his death." And you may tell any wicked man, thy sins procured the death of Christ; whatever the deniers say to excuse them. 3. Or it meaneth, that Christ died for the good of all men; and that is true, as before explained.

But the conditional new covenant, without

any difference in the tenor of it, doth equally give Christ, pardon and life to all mankind, antecedently to men's rejecting the offer, on condition of acceptance. And Christ equally satisfied God's justice for all the lapsed race of Adam, so far as to procure them this gift or covenant, and the other aforesaid common mercies.

It is a thing so contrary to the nature of christianity, and the spirit of Christ in his saints, to extenuate Christ's merits, purchase, interest or honour, or rob him of his due, that doubtless so many sincere christians would never be guilty of such injurious extenuations, and narrowing of Christ's redemption and grace, but that they cannot reconcile special grace with universal, and mistakingly judge them inconsistent: nor durst they opprobriously reproach his universal grace, by calling it vain, lame, imperfect, a mockery, &c. if the conceit of defending some truth by it did not quiet and deceive their consciences. Whereas indeed universal grace and special, do as perfectly and harmoniously consist as nature and grace do, and as the foundation and the building, and as any generical and specifick natures.

## Sect. 6.

THE faith by which we are justified hath God the Father for its object, as essentially as Christ the Saviour; as the baptismal covenant sheweth; and that not only secondarily a Christ is the Mediator and way to the Father, but also directly and primarily as the Father is the first in trinity, and as Creator first related to us, and as the end is first in our intention.

And as essential is it to this faith to believe in Christ as the purchaser of holiness, as to believe in him as the purchaser of pardon; and to believe in him as the teacher and ruler of the church, as to believe in him as the justifier of believers: and this is commonly confessed.

Indeed it is essential to this faith, to be the act of the three principal faculties of man's soul, the vital power, the intellect and the will; and to have for its object, God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and that in Christ, all that is essential to him as a Saviour be its object: and therefore, that it be an assent, consent, and practical alliance, in Christ as God and man, as the teacher, priest and king of the church, revealing the gospel, reconciling us to God, and ruling us in order to salvation.

To say that some one only of these parts of

Christ's office is the only object of justifying faith, and to say, that justifying faith is only one act of the soul, or many acts of one single faculty, and that to expect to be justified by assent, consent and affiance, or by believing in Christ as our teacher and ruler, as well as priest, and as a justifying judge, as well as a justifying sacrifice, is to expect justification by works in the sense that Paul denieth it; this is a vain distinguishing, a falsifying the doctrine of faith and justification, a departing from the scripture simplicity, and one of those human inventions which have wronged the church.

This will be plainer by a few instances. A servant's relation is founded in his consent to be a servant; a wife's relation is founded in her marriage-consent to be a wife, and to take that man for her husband. Now if the master of that servant, or the husband of that wife, be a nobleman, a rich man, a wise man, a good man, and they knew all this, and by knowing it were induced to consent, and are to have their proportionable benefits by his nobility, riches, wisdom, goodness, yet their title to these benefits ariseth not from the act of their consent, as it respected these benefits severally and distinctly, but merely by consent to the relation, as being the condition of collation. The wife is made noble by her husband's nobility, she is made rich by his riches;

she is instructed by his wisdom, &c. But she hath no more right to his riches for marrying him in the notion of rich, than for marrying him in the notion or thought of his wisdom or goodness. On her part, it was not consent to be rich by him that gave her right to his riches, and consent to be noble by him that gave her right to nobility ; but consent simply to be his wife that gave her right to all.

This is yet more fully evident, in that most usually men make consent to one thing, to be the condition of their receiving or right to another. And usually that which persons are most backward to, is made the condition of their right to that which they are most forward or willing to have. The master doth not say, if thou wilt have thy wages, thou shalt have right to them : but if thou wilt do my work, thou shalt have thy wages. The condition of marriage is conjugal love and fidelity : *i. e.* I will be thy husband, and give thee right to all that I have, if thou wilt be and do what is essential to a wife, and not if thou wilt have my riches, &c. If a father give a child a free gift on any condition, it will likely be, if thou wilt be a thankful and obedient child, and not if thou wilt have it. Or if mere consent to have it be put, it is usually when it is some gift which it is supposed that the person is not very willing to have : as if a sick man will have phy-

sick, if an ungodly man will have teaching, books, or godliness itself. But to this usually they are induced by the promise of somewhat else which they are willing of: as to the sick, if thou wilt take this physick, thou shalt have health; to the ungodly, if thou wilt have Christ and holiness, thou shalt have pardon and happiness.

### Sec. 7.

CHRIST'S personal righteousness is not given us or made ours, truly and properly in the thing itself, but in the effects, as was before observed. If it be said that, the covenant of grace doth as certainly pardon or justify us in the way and degree promised by it, for the merit of Christ's righteousness, as our own merit, had it been possible, would have done, or as our innocency would have justified us by the covenant of innocency, this is true.

But if the meaning be that, Christ's merit and satisfaction, by perfect holiness, and obedience, and suffering, are supposed or reputed by God to have been inherent in us, or done by us in our civil person in Christ; or that in a legal sense we did all those things ourselves, or that God judgeth us so to have done, by judging Christ and us to be the same civil person; or



that all the benefits of Christ's righteousness, shall as fully and immediately be ours, as if we had merited and satisfied in and by Christ; all this is false.

For if this were so, we could need no pardon; for he that is reputed to be innocent, by fulfilling all the law, is reputed never to have sinned, by omission or commission: and he could have no pardon of sin, who hath no sin to be pardoned: such an imputation of Christ's righteousness to us, would make his satisfaction null or vain: certainly neither imputable to us, nor useful for us.

Some to avoid this, divide the time of our lives, and suppose Christ's sufferings to have satisfied and purchased pardon for our sins, for all the time before our believing, and his righteousness to be imputed to us for the time since our believing: but this is an human fiction; our sins after believing must have pardon too, by Christ's satisfaction.

Some distinguish only of actions, and not of time, and say Christ's sacrifice satisfied for all our sins, that they may be forgiven, and his righteousness is imputed to us, that we may be also accounted just; but this is either ambiguity, or the fore-detected gross contradiction. For if by justice they mean reputed sinlessness, then these two cannot stand together: for he that is supposed a sinner, is supposed not sinless; and he that is

supposed sinless cannot be supposed to need pardon.

The very core of their error seemeth to be this, that they think we must be justified in Christ by the law of innocency, which justified Christ himself: and that we are quit from all guilt of fault, as well as obligation to punishment; which is a great untruth, contrary to all the scope of the gospel, which assureth us, that we are justified by the law of grace or faith, and not by the law of works: that Christ freeth us from the curse and penalty of the law: which he could not do, if we were reputed never to have deserved it, as never being sinners. If we are reputed such as fulfilled the law of innocency, by another in our civil person, or as fully representing us, all the gospel is overturned: there is no room for repentance, none for the satisfaction of Christ, none for faith in his blood, nor for pardon, or prayer for pardon, for any grace, act, duty or ordinance, sacrament, confession, or any thing which supposes sin.

To say that Adam's law meant "do this, by thyself or by Christ, and thou shalt live," is an human fiction, not found in scripture, confounding the law of innocency with the gospel: and to say that the new covenant maketh us one person with Christ, and then the law of Adam doth justify us, is a double error. We are not reputed one person with Christ; nor doth the first cove-

nant justify any but the person that performeth it. But we maintain as well as they, that the same righteousness of God, the same holy love of perfect obedience, are manifested in both covenants; and the ends of the first covenant are secured by the second; but the tenor and terms are not the same, nor the righteousness of the subject as denominated from those terms. It is not the same law which condemneth us and justifieth us, nor that justifieth Christ and us; nor is it the same habits, or acts, which are the immediate foundation of the relation of righteous in Christ and in us, though his righteousness be the meritorious cause of ours, and therefore not the same with the thing merited.

If there be, as there is, any thing which is given us through Christ, more than our own innocency or perfect obedience would have merited, that gift is more than remission of sin; and is to be ascribed accordingly to the purchase of Christ's merits.

This superadded gift, whatever it is, seemeth in scripture to be included in adoption, and not in justification, but yet it may in this sense be called justification, in that when our right to that gift is questioned, that right must be justified by the covenant donation, and by Christ's meritorious purchase of it.

It is greatly to be noted, that as a reward is in the formal notion more than not punishing, so

Christ hath not at all merited that eternal life should be ours, by way of reward for our fulfilling the law in him, but that it should be ours by his free gift, as a reward to him for his own merits, so that the relation of a reward for perfection, belongeth only formally to Christ, who through his love to sinners considereth their salvation as a benefit to himself.

Yet a reward it is to us, to be glorified; but not for our fulfilling the law of innocency by Christ, but for our believing in Christ, and performing the conditions of the covenant of grace: which giveth us life as a free gift; yet in the order of collation it hath the relation, and name of a reward to us, in the scripture.

So that here are three rewarding covenants before us, 1. The covenant or law of innocency rewarding man for perfection to the end; and this rewarded none but Christ: and it is false that we are rewarded by that covenant, or justified by it, for Christ's fulfilling it: But it justified Christ. 2. The law or covenant made only to and with Christ the mediator: and this covenant further rewarded Christ as mediator, giving him all that it promised to himself and us, for his performing the mediatorial conditions. And so our life is Christ's reward. 3. The covenant or law of grace, for it is the same thing

in several respects that is called the law and the covenant, which giving life on the condition of faith, doth justify and reward believers; and we are justified and rewarded by no other law.

Those who assert the rigid sense of imputation, are necessitated to say, what supposeth God's repute of the matter to be false; that is, that he reputeth us to have done that in and by Christ, which we never did by him: but God judgeth nothing to be otherwise than it is; and that he judgeth Christ to have been the sponsor and mediator, and in that character to have done and suffered as he did, is because it is true: but he judgeth him not to have been the legal person of the sinner, and as many persons as there are redeemed sinners in the world, because that is not true.

They say that what the surety doth, the debtor doth in law sense, and to judge so is not to err. But there are several sorts of sureties: for instance, there is a surety which, by the creditor's consent, doth pay the debt in his own name, agreeing that the debtor shall have no benefit by it but from him, as he shall give it, on certain terms: and Christ is such a surety. There is a surety that payeth the same debt that was due from the principal: and there is a surety or friend that undertaketh only to make the creditor satisfaction, because the debtor cannot pay: and this is the

case. There is a paymaster that is the debtor's instrument, whether servant, delegate, or whoever at his command or request doth pay the debt in his name and person: and this is not the case. And there is a proper surety, who payeth the debt in his own name though for another. This, as I said is the case; and therefore it is not we that paid it. Therefore to the objection I say, that to judge Christ such an instrument or delegate of ours, or surety that did all in our legal person, is to misjudge and err, which God cannot do.

Christ obeyed and suffered in the common nature of man, and our nature is so far redeemed by him that for original sin alone, no one shall perish, unless he add the rejection of grace.

It further appeareth, that we cannot be justified as personally fulfilling all righteousness in Christ: because we are all our life time under those great duties of the law of grace, which Christ neither did nor could do for us. We are bound all our days to accept a Saviour, seek pardon of sin, and sanctifying grace; to be diligent in the use of all means and ordinances; to do all our duties as sinners, in that manner as those should do that are in a physician's hands for cure. And if all this was undone till our conversion, and much of it after our conversion, and yet Christ never did it for us, nor we in him, how

can it be said that we are justified by fulfilling all the law in and by Christ? yea the law of nature still commandeth us, to obey the law of grace, supposing it made and revealed to us.

### Sec. 8.

It is ordinary with some writers and preachers to tell men, that no part of their righteousness is in themselves; and with others, that at least none which they are justified by in any part is in them; and that it is all in Christ only: and that nature is loth to yield to this, and thinketh it a fine thing to have some little part of the honour to itself. This well explained, may be made sound: but thus grosly delivered, it is but a popular cheat under the taking pretence of self-abasement and giving Christ all. The devil is as willing as any one, that you should have nothing honourable or praise-worthy in you, and be as vile as he can make you. It is God who honoureth those that honour him, and praiseth his saints as the excellent on earth, adorned with his own lovely image, and partakers of the divine nature: and it is Satan and wicked men that vilify and dishonour them. And I have oft lamented, that those very men that hold this kind of doctrine of self-abasement, professing themselves to have no part of righteousness, nor share at all in any good work, are yet

too oft so proudly conceited of their own goodness (even forholding that they have none for which they are praise-worthy) as that their pride is no small trouble to the churches and all about them.

Whatever is of God is good, and whatever is good is laudable or praise-worthy, and meriteth to be esteemed as it is.

There is no righteousness which will not justify him that hath it, *in tantum*, so far as he is righteous, for the contrary is a contradiction. For to be just is to be justifiable: he that gave but six pence to the poor is justifiable against this accusation, that he did not give it.

He that is no cause of any good work, is no christian, and worse than any wicked man I know in the world: and he that is some cause of it, must not be denied falsly to be so: nor a saint denied to be a saint, upon a false pretence of self-denial.

As God is seen here in the glass of his works, so he is to be loved and praised as so appearing: therefore he that dishonoureth his work dishonoureth God, and hindereth his due love and praise; and his most lovely and honourable work on earth, is his holy image in his saints: and as Christ will come to be admired and glorified in them at last, so God must be seen and glorified in them here in some degree. And to deny the glory of his image is injuring him, and that in which the worst will



serve you. He that will praise God as Creator and Redeemer, must praise his works of creation and redemption : and is it the way of praising him as our Sanctifier, to dispraise his work of sanctification ?

Those poor sinners of my acquaintance who lived in the grossest sins against conscience, have been glad enough of such doctrine, and forward enough to believe, that there is nothing in man that in any part can justify him, or that is any part of his righteousness, but it is all out of us in Christ, and therefore they are as justifiable as any : but conscience will not let them believe it as they desire.

It is arrogant folly to divide the praise of any good act between God and man, and to say God is to have so many parts, and man so many : for the whole is due to God, and yet some is due to man : for man holdeth his honour only in subordination to God, and not dividedly in co-ordination ; and therefore all is due to God : for that which is man's is God's, because we have nothing but what we have received.

If all had been taken from God's honour which is given to the creature, God would have made nothing, or made nothing good ; heaven and earth, and all the world would derogate from his honour ; and none of his works should be praised : and the better any man is, the more he would dis-

honour God. But he made all good, and is glorious in the glory, and honourable in the honour of all: and to justify the holiness of his servants is to justify him.

If these teachers mean that no man hath any power freely to specify the acts of his own will, by any other help of God, besides necessitating premotion, and so that every man doth all that he can do, and no man can do more than he doth, they dishonour God by denying him to be the Creator of that free power which is essential to man, and which God himself accounteth it his honour to create; and they feign God to condemn and punish men for as great impossibilities, as for not making a world, or for not being angels.

Thus also such men teach that Christ strip-peth a christian of two things, his sins and his righteousness: or that two things must be cast away for Christ, sins and righteousness: but they ought to speak better, if they would not deceive; nothing is to be cast away as evil but sin. Righteousness, truly such, is good, and never to be cast away. If it be no righteousness, why do they falsely say that we must cast away our righteousness? To cast away a false conceit of righteousness, is not to cast away righteousness, but sin only. There is nothing so good, which may not be made the object of sin, not Christ or his righteousness, or God him

self excepted; but we should not therefore say that we must cast them away, because we must not thus objectively abuse them: so holiness and true righteousness (inherent or imputed) may be objects of sinful pride and boasting; but it is not edifying doctrine therefore to say that we must cast away inherent and imputed righteousness: but yet true self-denial requireth that we deny our righteousness to be that which indeed it is not. And so when men accounted the Jewish observations to be a justifying righteousness, in competition with, and in opposition to Christ, Paul counteth it as loss, and dung, and nothing in that respect; when yet elsewhere he saith *I have lived in all good conscience to this day*. So if a man will conceit, that his common grace will justify him without holiness, or his holiness without the merits of Christ, he must deny this righteousness; that is, deny it to be what it is not, and cast away (not it, but) the false conceit of it: and so if any libertine will say that Christ's righteousness imputed to him, will justify him without faith, or be instead of holiness to him, he must deny imputed righteousness thus to be what indeed it is not.

When we tell them, that, if we had fulfilled all the law reputatively by Christ as our legal person, we could not be bound to further obedience to it, they answer, that we are not

bound to obey to the same ends as Christ, *i. e.* for righteousness, or justification or merit, but in gratitude. But this is to give us the cause, and ignorantly to destroy their own. For this is to say, that when a man is reputed to have fulfilled all the law yet it is to be reputed unfulfilled as to certain ends: as if he fulfilled all the law that fulfilled it not to all due ends: or as if the law obliged one man to fulfil it twice over, once simply and in all its obligations, and another time for other ends; or as if the law required any more than absolute perfection; or that absolute perfection had not been in Christ's holy obedience; or as if there were any obedience, whose end is not righteousness and justification, against the charge of the contrary disobedience. Do not those men obey that they may be so far righteous? or is not every man so far righteous as he doth righteousness? Is not every man that loveth God justifiable as such, so far as he loveth him? and is not gratitude an end, and a thing commanded by the law? If we obeyed perfectly in Christ, we were perfectly thankful in Christ.

They see not that their own answer implieth the truth of what we assert, and is the same that we give, which their cause is incapable of, *viz.* we say, "That Christ did indeed most perfectly obey the law of innocency, so far for us and in

our stead, (though not in our persons) as that he hath vindicated the truth and glory of God and his law, by doing that which we should have done, and did not : and hath merited for us a better covenant, which obligeth us not to obey for the ends of the first covenant, viz. that our perfection might be our righteousness, or the condition of life ; but only to obey for the ends of the new covenant, for the obtaining and improving of recovering grace, and salvation by Christ freely given us ; which we ourselves must do or perish.”

And whereas they tell us that, We may as well say that man must not die because Christ died for us, as not obey because Christ obeyed for us, they strangely use our reason against themselves and know it not. For we say, that we must die because we did not perfectly either obey the law, or suffer all its penalty by Christ as our legal person : but he suffered only to satisfy justice *in tantum* to this end, that man himself suffering death and temporal afflictions, and obeying the law of grace, might be saved from all the rest of the punishment. But if we had so fulfilled the law as aforesaid, by doing or suffering, we could not have died, nor suffered the least affliction as a penalty : for all punishment in the essence of the relation is for sin.

## Sect. 9.

THE great controversy about human merit, which hath made such a noise in the world, is of so easy solution, that I can scarce think but almost all sober christians are agreed in sense, notwithstanding their seeming differences. Only distinguish, 1. between commutative justice and distributive justice; 2. between governing justice according to God's several laws of innocency, mosaical works, and of grace; 3. and between justifying and meriting simply, and comparatively; and a'l seems very plain and intelligible.

1. For any creature, man, or angel, to dream of meriting from God, in point of commutative justice, is blasphemy and madness: *i. e.* that we can give him any thing that shall profit him, or which is not absolutely his own, as a compensation for what he giveth us. He maketh himself a God that asserteth this of himself. 2. To say that any since Adam, except Christ, doth merit of God in point of governing justice, according to the law of innocency, is a falshood; for he that saith, *He hath no sin, is a liar.* 3. Or to say that we can merit pardon or justification, merely by observing the law of Moses, was the pernicious error of the Jews. But to deny subordinate

comparative merit, or rewardableness, from God's governing, distributive, paternal justice, according to the covenant of grace, consisting in the performance of the conditions of that covenant, and presupposing Christ's merits, is to subvert all religion and true morality, and to deny the scope of all the scriptures, and the express assertion of an evangelical worthiness, which is all that this merit signifieth : to say nothing of contradicting catholic antiquity, and hardening the papists against the truth.

This comparative merit is but such as a thankful child hath towards his father, who giveth him a purse of gold on condition that he put off his hat and say I thank you ; who deserveth it in comparison of his brother, who disdainfully or neglectfully refuseth it. This last being absolutely said to deserve to be without it, but the former only comparatively said to deserve it as a free gift.

And those that reject the saying of some papists, who in this sense say that Christ merited that we might merit, placing our evangelical merit in a mere subordination to Christ's, do but shew what prejudice and partiality can do, and harden those who perceive their errors.

Some may think that the high things required in the gospel, self-denial forsaking all, &c. are more than the mere receiving of a free gift. But

upon consideration it will appear to be no more in reality ; for when we say that it is the receiving of a free gift, we must mean according to the nature and to the use of the gift. As if you are required to take food, the meaning is, to eat it, and not to throw it away. If you are required to take such a man to be your king, your master, your tutor, your physician, &c. the meaning is, as such, to the use of his proper office. And to accept of God as God, that is, our absolute Owner, Ruler, and End ; and Christ as our Saviour, Prophet, Priest, and King ; and the Holy Ghost as our Sanctifier to illuminate, quicken and renew us, is the sum of the gospel.

Self-denial, and forsaking contraries, and resisting impediments, is necessarily implied in this acceptance : he that refuseth to come out of his prison and chains, refuseth his liberty ; and he refuseth the gold, that will not cast away his handful of dirt to take it. So that really all is but a thankful acceptance of the mercy of the new covenant, according to its nature and use as it is offered.

#### Sec. 10.

OUR first constitutive justification, being in its nature a right to impunity, and to life or glory, is a relation which must be continued to the end, and therefore must have the true causes



and conditions continued, and would cease if any of them ceased.

Though all our past sins are pardoned at our first faith or conversion, yet it is most certain that pardon or justification is not perfect at first, no nor on this side of death : and the saying of many that justification is perfect at first, and sanctification only by degrees, is a palpable error ; for that is not perfect which is not continued and brought on to its end, but upon continued conditions, and diligent use of means to the last, and which leaveth many penalties unremoved, that require further means to be used for their removal. We have new sins to be pardoned every day. Our remaining corruption is such as needeth a continued pardon, till it be perfectly done away. And the day of judgment is not come, for which the most perfect justification is reserved. All men shall be then judged according to their works or deeds done in the body, whether good or evil.

To be justified *then* will be to be adjudged such as have the true causes and conditions of right to impunity and eternal life.

The great thing to be glorified in judgment, is God's love, wisdom, justice, and truth, and Christ's great merits and performance in our redemption. But the great things questioned, accused, tried and judged, will be our performance of the conditions of the covenant of grace. That

day is not to try God whether he be just, or Christ, whether his merits and satisfaction were sufficient, and whether he hath done his part; but to try man, whether he hath true right to impunity and glory by his having performed the condition on which the covenant giveth that right, and be indeed the true receiver of it.

It is very easy therefore, where prejudice blindeth not men, to see the concord of Christ's saying, we are justified by our words, and Paul's by faith, and not by works, and James by works, and not by faith only. Christ speaketh of a particular justification, from a common great crime, a wicked tongue as the sign or product of a wicked heart; and this must be part of the personal righteousness, by which we may be justified as true christians, and not by keeping the law of Moses, or doing any works which will be to us instead of Christ or free pardon and righteousness by him. And James speaketh of the full condition of justification, as final and complete.

The key of understanding Paul's discourses of justification is to know that the grand question which he first manageth is, whether the Gentiles may not be saved without keeping the Jewish law, as well as the Jews with it? To prove the affirmative, he sheweth that the Jews themselves cannot be justified by the law, notwithstanding the divinity and great excellency of it; but must be

justified by a Saviour, in order to which the sincere keeping of the law of Moses was intended to be subservient. The Jews did so fondly admire the law, and their national privileges under it, that they thought the exact keeping of it was necessary and sufficient to justification and salvation; that the Messiah was not to be their righteousness, as a sacrifice for sin, and meriter of free pardon, and the gift of life, but only a great king and deliverer, to redeem them by power from all their enemies. That as God had made their law sufficient to political ends, and to temporal rewards and punishments, it was also sufficient to eternal rewards and punishments; and this of itself, and not in mere subordination to the typified Messiah. Therefore they thought that he who kept the law so far as to commit no sin which the law punished with death or abscission, and who for all his other pardonable sins, performed the required penances and sacrifices, was by this, which is called the works of the law, a righteous justifiable person. What therefore Paul evinceth is, 1. That the law was never made for such an end. 2. That it stood in subordination to redemption and free given life. 3. That the free gift or covenant of grace containing the promise of the Messiah, and pardon and life by him, was before the law, and justified Abraham and others without it. 4. That their law was so strict, that no man could perfectly keep

it. 5. That every sin deserveth death, though their law punished not every sin with death by the magistrate. 6. That their law was never obligatory to the Gentile world. 7. That it only discovered sin, without giving the spirit of grace to overcome it. 8. That no man ever came to heaven by that way of merit which they dreamed of, but all by the way of redemption, grace, free gift, and pardoning mercy. Therefore their conceit that they were just in the main, and forgiven their sins, and so justifiable by the mere dignity of Moses's law which they kept, and not by the free gift, pardon and grace of a Redeemer, was a pernicious error. But the true way of righteousness was to become true christians, that is, to believe in God as the giver of Salvation, in Christ as the Redeemer, and his Spirit as our life and sanctifier.

Our justifying and saving faith is plainly in Paul's sense the same thing with our christianity, or becoming christians: and the same thing with our baptismal faith and consent. To believe in Christ *as Christ*, is in scripture justifying faith; but to accept his righteousness only, and not to believe in him as our Lord, our Teacher, Intercessor, &c. is not to believe in him as Christ.

St. James therefore having to do with some who thought the bare profession of christianity was christianity, and that faith was a mere assent to truth, and that to believe the gospel true, and

trust to be justified by Christ was sufficient to justification, doth convince them that they were mistaken, and that when God spake of justification by faith, without the works of the law, he never meant a faith that containeth not a resolution to obey him in whom we believe, nor that is separated from actual obedience ; but that as we must be justified by our faith against the charge of being infidels, so must we be justified by our personal holiness and sincere obedience against the charge, that we are unholy and wicked, or impenitent, or hypocrites, or else we shall never be adjudged to salvation, that is justified by God. The perfection of justification will be by the final executive act, the taking the justified to glory.

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Sec. 11.

GOD may well be called the perfect first cause of human actions, in that he giveth man all his natural faculties, and a power to act or not act, to choose this or that : and as the fountain of nature, life and motion, doth afford the influx necessary to this free agency. So that when any act is done, as an act in general, God is the first cause of it : for it is done by the power which he

giveth and continueth, and there is no power used to produce it which is not given by God.

An act as such, hath no morality in it, and is from God as the author of nature. But the morality of an act is formally the relative rectitude or obliquity of it, referred to God's governing will or law, and to his goodness or will as it is man's end. And materially it is (not the act as such, but) the act as exercised on an unmeet object rather than on a meet one, or to an undue end rather than a due one; or else the omission of the act as to the due end and object, which is the ground of the sinfulness; and so *è contra*.

This comparative mode of exercise addeth no proper physical entity at all to the general nature of the act as such. In omissions there is no natural act, but the privation of it. In actual sins, to love this object rather than that, hath no more natural entity than to love that rather than this; and no more than is the general nature of love as such.

It is therefore an invalid argument, that man would be the first cause, and so be God, if he could determine his own will without God's determining premotion; and so there should be some being in the world which God is not the cause of: for this modality is no proper being above the act as such.

If any will litigate about the name, let them

call it *being* or *no being* as they please ; but it is such as God can make a creature able to do. And he that dares to say that the Almighty is not able to make a creature that can determine his own will to this object rather than to that, under his influx, without determining premotion, on pretence that his reason doth find a contradiction in it, is bolder against God, than I shall be. And if God can do it, we have no reason to doubt whether it be done.

Men seem not in denying this, to consider the signification of the word *power*, when they confess that God giveth man the power to choose or refuse, and yet say it is impossible for him to act by it, without this premotion. If so, it was only a power to choose when predetermined to it. He that hath a proper power to choose, is able to choose by that power.

God therefore is truly the first cause of the act by giving the power, and doing all that belongeth to the author of nature in order to the exercise of it. And he is the first cause of our liberty in making us free agents ; and he is the first cause of the moral goodness of our actions, by all that he doth by his laws, providence and grace to make them good : but he is no way the first cause of them as evil.

That which is a power but hypothetically, on condition of something not in my power, is no

power properly so called. As to say, I am able to leap to Heaven if God will cause it ; I am able to lift a thousand pound with sufficient help which I have not ; I am able to see if I had light : is not to possess a true power *ad hoc*. But to constitute a formal power, it is necessary that I have all things, without which I cannot, and with which I *can*, do the act.

The natural power of intellection and volition every man hath as a man : and when God, Christ, heaven, are brought to us with all the conditions necessary to objects of intellect and will, we have formal power to understand and will them, in this natural sense.

But the soul hath a vicious indisposition to the spiritual exercise of these faculties or powers : and this indisposition is commonly called a moral impotency.

When this indisposition is so great, as that no man in that case doth the act, we say he is morally unable : and when it is not so great, but that under that indisposition some men do the act, in that state of help we say that such a man is morally able. Therefore he that is yet more disposed, is more able ; for there are various degrees.

But if a man have so great a disposition as that he is ready to the facile and frequent performance of the act, that promptitude is cal-



led a habit, and is more than a mere moral power.

It is certain that men can do more than they do: not only that they could do more if God would predetermine them, or give them more grace; but that *properly* they can. The worst hath power to do more good, and forbear more evil than he doth; and so have the best.

Adam had proper power, natural and moral, to have stood when he fell: he sinned not for want of necessary power to have forborn it.

They that deny this, and resolve all sin into God's unresistable necessitating operation, or denying of power absolutely and antecedently necessary, I think make way for Hobbe's theology, or subversion of all religion.

Men have a power even moral to the use of many means which God hath appointed for the begetting of faith, before they have a moral power to believe.

God hath appointed or commanded all men, the use of certain duties and means for their recovery: and there is no man that is not obliged to use such means; nor any man that is to use them in despair of success: the very command being some signification of God's will, that obedience shall not be in vain. Whether the name

of an implicit promise be apt for that command, I leave to those that have a mind to contend about names.

By all this it appeareth, that our natural power is indisposed, to all that virtue or moral good which tendeth to salvation : that it is not equally indisposed to all such good : that its indisposition to some means of recovery, is no greater than what may be overcome by God's commoner sort of grace : that this commoner grace is not so effectual, as that all that receive it, do all the good that they can do by it, even in a moral sense ; nor all that some others do that have no more help ; but the wilful negligence or resistance of the receiver, frequently frustrateth it, though not always : that the right use of this commoner grace, is a way appointed by God himself, and not in vain, in which men may be made fit to receive that special grace which will call them savingly to believe : that no man is denied that special grace that deserveth it not by the abuse of common grace ; and therefore no man is condemned for want of natural power as such, but only for want of stirring up his natural power by those helps of grace by which he might have done it, and for want of that further good which by the helps rejected he might have been brought up to, had he not wilfully neglected the power and helps which he had. Yea usually God long

waiteth patiently on sinners with the tenders of mercy, while they reject it, before he utterly forsake them.

They that denying our self-determining power, make volition and free volition to signify the same, seem rather to jest than seriously dispute: if this be all one, why do we blind the world with words, and not plainly put the case whether man hath any will, and not whether his will be free? This opinion of liberty, leaveth no difference between brutish spontaneity and free will, save only that this doth follow reason; which indeed is a difference of guides but not of liberty.

And, according to this opinion, if God gave Satan power to move any man's will to sin by as true a physical motion as that by which I move my pen, it were no constraint, nor loss of natural liberty, because it is moved to be willing.

And if they lay all on the congruity of the act to the habit or inclination, then if Satan could infuse irresistibly into the will, an inclination to hate God or to any sin, and then physically determine it according to that inclination, it were no force, or loss of natural liberty.

But I think he that by irresistable efficiency makes a man's will wicked both in its inclination and acts, doth incomparably more against him and his liberty, than he that could force his

tongue or hand against his will, or he that only tempted and persuaded him.

The three grand reasons why we cannot receive the Dominican doctrine of determining promotion are. 1. Because, whatever vain talk is used to blind men, it maketh God the sole total necessitating cause of all the sin that is committed in the world, or can be. 2. It unavoidably destroyeth the christian faith; for if God be really the determining cause of all lies and other sins in the world, then his veracity, which is the formal object of faith, is gone. 3. Because it feigneth God to damn most of the world for not conquering God, who insuperably predetermined them to the forbidden act; that is, for not being Gods, or greater than God; and that he sent Christ to die only for those sins which he thus pre-moved us to irresistibly.

The same reasons will hold good against what others say of predetermining by a chain of necessitating causes, viz. that God by the object necessitateth the act of the intellect; and that the intellect necessitateth the will: for it amounteth to the same if all sinful volitions be necessitated. Nor will it at all satisfy any one to be told, that the sins of men are to be resolved into the devil's temptation as a necessitating cause, till he know into what to resolve the devil's sin. And he may turn Manichee in time, that can

believe that God gave the devil power to necessitate innocent man to sin, and bring all sin and misery on the world; much more he that saith, that God did all this himself.

As there is *libertas voluntatis & libertas hominis*, so there is a coaction or constraint of the will and of the man. I should take my will to be constrained, if by an irresistible power it were suddenly made impious in act and habit, or either. But the man is not said to be constrained, so long as he hath his will.

The liberty of the will consisteth not in such an indifferency as leaveth it *in æquilibrio*, equally inclined to this or that; for then all habits or inclinations would destroy liberty: but in an indetermination with a power of self-determining: which power is called indifferent, because it is a power to this or that, and not because it is equally inclined, no nor equally a power to either: for there may be inequality.

To the question, Why a man forbears a sin to day, which he committed yesterday; or, Why of two men with the same measure of assisting grace, the one commits a sin which the other forbears; it is sufficient to answer, because this man, at this time, used that power which God had given him, in stirring up his own will to concur with grace; and the other man, or this at another time, did not make this exertion. So

that it is no deifying the will of a rational free-agent to say, that it is essentially a self-determining faculty, made by God in the image of his liberty, and depending on him, and not able to act without him as the first cause ; but yet on supposition of his natural preservation and universal concurrence, and of his directions and laws, is able to make choice, to will or not will, to will this rather than that, without divine necessitating predetermination, and without any more grace or help than sometimes it hath when it doth the contrary : all which shewing the natural power of man's will, and its liberty, must be readily acknowledged by all sides, that will not say that Adam's first sin, and every other since that, is resolvable into God's causation in case of commissions, and God's non-causation in case of omissions ; and that man can no more do any thing but what he doth, than he can be God, or overcome God, or live and act without God.

And as we must thus agree, that natural liberty consisteth in a self-determining power peculiar to rational free-agents ; so we are all agreed, except the Pelagians, that man's nature is vitiated by original sin, and therefore that the will which is naturally free from force and necessitation (except from God, who never necessitateth it to evil) is yet in servitude to concupiscence, and is not free either from the enticements of sense, or

the erroneous conduct of a blinded mind, or from its own vicious habits; and therefore that this holy, or moral liberty of the will, can only be restored by the medicinal grace of Christ.

### Sec. 12.

THE method of God's operation on the soul is so unsearchable, that I had rather silence, than pretend to decide many of the controversies long agitated about it: and had not men's audacious decisions and furious contentions, made it accidentally necessary to repress their presumption and errors, I should reverently have passed by much that I must now meddle with. But the cure must be suited to the disease.

So much as is intelligible herein, is amiable and glorious; and the prospect of God's providence is delectable to the wise: for his works are great and excellent, sought out of them who have pleasure therein.

The nature and order of them cannot be known by the single consideration of particular effects; but by beginning at the original, and proceeding orderly from the superior causes to the inferior, and seeing how every thing worketh in its proper capacity and place: which man can do but very defectively: and therefore knoweth but little, or in part.

God is one infinite *spirit*, in three essential virtues or principles, *life*, (or active power,) *understanding* and *will*. Not that *life*, *intellect* and *will*, are formally the same in God as in the creature, or can formally be conceived by us; but while we must know God in a glass, man's soul must be that glass; and we must use such notions and names of God, or none.

These principles, as transcendent in perfection, are called *greatness*, (or omnipotence,) *wisdom* and *goodness*, (or love,) by names borrowed from their effects upon the creatures.

This one God is revealed to us in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; one in essence: incomprehensibly three *ad intus* but discernibly three in their operations *ad extra*, and relations thereto.

The three divine persons do always inseparably co-operate; but so as that there is a trinity also of their impressions or *vestigia*, which are answerably to have a threefold attribution, each principle being eminently apparent in its own impressions, though in union with the rest.

God's works are *creation*, *governing*, and *perfecting*; and so he is, 1. The first efficient of all being, by creating and continuing, which are as one; 2. The disposing or governing cause; 3. The end.

God is so active as not to be at all passive:



all the active creatures are first passive, as receiving the influx of the first cause; but they are naturally active in that dependence, and supposing that influx.

As the great first cause, God hath settled a course of second causes, that one thing may act upon and move another; and though he work upon the highest of these causes immediately without any other subordinate cause, yet on all the rest he ordinarily worketh by superior created causes; which are some of them necessary, and operate in one constant course, and some of them voluntary and free, and operate more mutably and contingently.

The course of necessitating causes is commonly called Nature, and the influence of angels, and other voluntary causes, distinguished from natural; but they all operate as second causes under the influx and government of God.

The sun is the most potent instrument in visible nature; and God operateth on all corporeal beings here below by its virtue and influx.

This virtue of the sun is universal and equal in itself, but produceth wonderful diversity of effects: The same influx causeth the stench of a dunghill, and the fragrancy of flowers; some things to live, and some to die; some to be soft, and some hard, &c. In a word, there are few changes, or various actions in bodies, which the

sun is not a cause of; but not the specifying cause.

The reason why one equal influx produceth diversity of motions, is the diversity of receptive dispositions and natures. *Recipitur ad modum recipientis*. So one poise maketh various motions in a clock, &c.

God operateth on second causes not *ad ultimum potentiae*, but freely as he pleaseth.

God worketh by second causes according to the aptitude of the said causes; so that the operation of infinite power is limited according to the second cause which God useth.

There is a superiority and inferiority among spirits as well as bodies; and whether God work on all our souls by superior spirits as second causes, is unknown to us: It is not improbable, according to the order of his providence in other things: but we know little of it certainly.

But certain we are that superior voluntary agents, angels and devils, have very much to do with our souls, and operate much upon them. It is a wonderful power which wise observers perceive satan hath upon the imagination, or thinking faculty, of which I could give some instances, enough to convince a rational Sadducee; and it is not probable that good angels have less power or will.

We are sure that God hath ordained one great

universal second cause to convey his Spirit and grace by, which is Jesus Christ. As the sun is an universal cause of motion, light and heat to inferior creatures, and God operateth by the sun ; so is Christ ordained to be the sun of righteousness, by whom God will convey his spiritual influx to men's souls ; and there is now no other conveyance to be expected.

Christ's human nature united personally to the divine, and glorified, is by the office of mediator authorised, and by the fullness of the Holy Spirit, enabled and fitted to this communication of God's spiritual influx to mankind.

This influx on the soul is not single, but is ever threefold, producing *life, light and love* ; according to the threefold receptivity of the soul.

It is certain that it is not only on believers that Christ operateth by the Spirit : for he draweth men to believe, and many wicked men have common gifts of the Spirit, which are all communicated by Christ.

As nature itself is in his power, and is delivered to him, so all gifts and operations, which are mercies contrary to merit, are from Christ : Even as the sun shineth in the night by the moon, and in the dawning of the day by itself unseen, and after by itself appearing : so Christ shineth to the heathen world in abundance of natural and

providential mercies, and to some by nearer approaches ; as well as to the church by the manifestation of himself. All which is evident, 1. Because the whole lapsed world in Adam and Noah were brought under his own covenant of grace, according to which he operateth. 2. In that so much mercy after sin, will not stand with God's governing by the violated law of innocency. 3. In that Christ is expressly called, *the Saviour of the world*; and *the Saviour of all men, especially of them that believe*: and is said to have died for all, in that all were dead; and to have tasted death for every man, &c. and to be *the true light which lighteth every man coming into the world* (or coming into the world, lighteth every man.) And we are told, *in him was life, and the life was the light of men; and the light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehended it not, &c.*

This threefold influx of Christ's Spirit, for Life, Light and Love, is not equally effectual on all, nor equally effectual on the same person at several times, nor each part of the influx equally effectual on the same person at the same time.

## Sect. 13.

THOUGH divine power, wisdom, and goodness, act in conjunction, yet in the work of man's recovery their impressions are not equal; but as *power*, with wisdom and love, more appeared in the creation, so *wisdom* with power, conveying love, appeareth more in our redemption; and *love* with power and wisdom is most conspicuous and illustrious in our renewed state, began indeed by sanctification, but perfected in our glorification.

The impressions of all the divine virtues are excellent in their several kinds: and it's hard for us to say that this is simply more excellent than that: but we can say, which of them is more suitable to the nature of man, and on this account to be esteemed and loved by him. And so we esteem the impressions of wisdom and love as most suitable to us.

Many animals excel man in strength and activity, and yet we account the wisdom and moral goodness of man to be a greater excellency, and to make him the more noble creature.

And God seemeth to tell it us, by calling these his image; and by making man the lord of the other creatures.

Among men, we take him not for the most

excellent, who is the strongest, but who is the wisest and best. And therefore the wisest and best are by Aristotle said to be formed by nature to rule the rest: and by all sober men are thought to be the fittest to guide and rule others, how seldom soever it cometh to pass: while the robuster sort are fitter for labourers and mechanicks.

It is therefore the glory of God's *sapiential* work of government which eminently shineth forth in the kingdom of Christ upon earth.

This kingdom is the state of relation between God as the head or ruler, and man as the subject as he is to be guided by grace to glory: and Christ is to be considered as the supreme official head, or general administrator: who hath under him a course of means for the accomplishment of his work.

He hath appointed ordinary ministers as his standing officers through all generations to preach his word; and he endoweth them with special gifts thereto; and chargeth them to preach *in season and out of season*, with urgency and importunity, to all mankind, whatever it cost them, and whatever they undergo.

He hath appointed also prayer as his means to obtain grace by preparing the heart to a due receptivity; and praise and thanksgiving to sweeten it to us in the review when we have received it.

He hath appointed the publick assembly of his servants, that concourse might augment the sacred flame, in the performance of this sacred work.

He hath commanded every private christian to be a helper to others, by conference, exhortation and good example.

He hath made pastoral discipline a great ordinance to promote the due performance of all the rest.

He hath made it the duty of parents to teach their children diligently his word, lying down and rising up, at home and abroad, Deut. vi. & ix. and to educate them in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, having bound them first in covenant to God and the Mediator.

He maketh all the world about us, the book or glass in which we may see our Maker and his will; yea even our own natures; and all things must be sanctified and used to this holy end.

He setteth death continually before our eyes, assuring us of the shortness of our lives, and shewing us how soon we must leave this world, that we may read vanity upon all, and not be deceived by it.

By all this we see that this kingdom of Christ, is a sapiential frame of moral causes, designed for the government of man, and glorifying eminently the wisdom of our ruler.

And he that will think rightly of this excellent frame must attend particularly to the following things, viz. That Christ is a prophet, priest and king, and that the *government is laid upon his shoulders*, Isa. ix. 6.

That we are not only patients and pardoned sinners, but also subjects, and engaged covenanters.

That Christ's Church is not like a statuary's shop, but a kingdom and a school, where all must learn and obey.

That Christ hath not only motive power, but laws, promises, threatenings, &c. by which he works.

That he hath a day, in which as rector, he will judge the world in righteousness, according to what we have done in the body.

That the felicity of the redeemed in one glorified body with Christ, is the end of all, where God's remunerating justice, and his governing wisdom and love, are to be glorified for ever.

From all this I conclude, that they that slight all this work of God, by the contemptuous name of *moral suasion*, and take it to be a diminutive term as to the honour of it, to call it *moral*, and talk of God's work of grace on the soul, as if there were no more in it than a *physical* motion, and God converted souls, but as boys whip their tops, or as women turn their wheels, or the spring



moveth a watch, are Cartesian blind theologues, and overlook the very nature of that theology which they profess, which is the doctrine of the *kingdom of God over man*; and while they see little but matter and motion, they are fitter mechanically to treat of or deal with stones, or bricks, or timber, than men; being unfit to treat of human government, much more of divine.

#### Sec. 14.

THAT God communicateth his grace ordinarily by means, as ordinarily he causeth natural effects by means, and miracles are rare; may be proved by these following arguments.

1. In that he hath made so large provision of means, and that in an admirable frame, constituting as it were a moral world; which he would never have done, if he ordinarily wrought without them. Had not God decreed to communicate grace by means, he could have done it with a *fiat*.

2. God worketh on all things according to their nature; and this is suitable to the nature of man; *order* is a moral effect, and needeth only a *moral causation*.

3. Experience telleth us that those prosper best in grace that most faithfully and diligently use

the means: and we have no reason to believe that any man ever came to actual knowledge, faith or love without them.

4. We find that the greatest neglecters and despisers of means, are every where most graceless, and the worst of men.

5. We have frequent and strict commands to use means with constancy and diligence.

6. When God will save a people he sends them the gospel, and when he will forsake them he taketh it away.

But I would not be understood to assert, that the means are effectual of themselves; but only that God operateth moral effects by means, as he doth natural by natural means, being still the prime cause of all himself.

If we thus conjoin all causes, and separate not what God hath united, it will help us the better to escape error in this matter. But if men will dream that all which is ascribed to second causes is a derogation from the first, they both dishonour the work, and him that framed it.

*Order* is the beauty of the world, and of the soul; and worthy to have had a notable place in the predicaments.

It is the sum of morality, the business of frail men on earth, and much of the glory of the church triumphant in heaven; it is God's work not ours to make new substances; it is ours to keep

order in ourselves and in the actions, which God by nature enableth us to perform.

Vainly therefore do some pretend that it is a deifying of the will to say, that God can enable it to cause the *order* of a man's actions, by mere moral helps, without God's determining premotion to that order: for this is to cause no real *being*. And he that is moved to the act in general, needeth no more premotion from God to the disorder and sinfulness of the act.

And they who will call the production of faith, a creation in the strict and proper sense, do not consider, that faith is an act of the same natural power or faculty which we had before: and grace doth cause us to order that act aright, as to the due object and other circumstances. But if any will call it a creation, I contend not about the name.

But the whole state of the man, habitual, relative and practical taken together, is called in scripture a new creature, and the new man tropically, but not unfitly; partly, because we are really new, though not by another humanity or species of natural essence, yet by many accidents: and partly, because those accidents are so great, and make so great a change of our state, as that they emulate a natural essence.

Though the law and the gospel, and many antecedent means be the same, they have different

effects on different persons ; which may be caused many ways : as by the diverse disposition of the receivers (a common cause of variety in the world :) by the diversity of impediments and temptations, &c.

The great question is, how far the diversity of receptive dispositions is from God? Answ. 1. God made all equal at first in Adam. 2. All were equal in sin by his fall. 3. Cain and Abel differed from several causes, and not one alone. Abel differed from Cain in faith and obedience, by God's grace as the chief cause, and his own will and agency as the second cause. Cain differed from Abel by unbelief and sin, by his own will and Satan's temptation. 4. The sins of later parents, as of Cain, Ham, Esau, &c. make a further difference, by depriving their posterity of some means, help or grace, which else they had been equally capable of with others. 5. It is certain that man hath much to do about his own heart, by which he is to be the second cause of his own receptive disposition ; and if he fail, is the only cause of his indisposion.

Difference is but dissimilitude ; an alteration of one of the subjects will make it *differ* from the other. When the good angels stood and the evil fell, if you ask, who made the difference? It was the devils by forsaking their first estate : though constitutively, both their sin, and the angels obe-

dience made the dissimilitude. If you suppose Cain and Abel equally under grace at first, and ask, who made the difference? I answer, constitutively Cain's sin and Abel's righteousness make, or *is*, the difference: but as to efficiency, Cain made the difference by rejecting grace. So if you should suppose two equally qualified with common grace, and one of them to lose it, the efficiency of the difference is imputable to him. But if you suppose two equally lost in sin, and one converted and not the other, the constitutive causes of the difference are the one's sin and the other's repentance; but the efficiency is God's grace and man's repentance or will.

But when Paul doth ask, *who made thee to differ?* he meaneth *who gave thee that good by which thou differest?* and expoundeth it by *what hast thou which thou hast not received?* and no doubt but all good is received from God: and this would have held true, if God had by equal operation done as much on the other, which had been ineffectual by his indisposition or rejection.

Nature and scripture persuade us, that the same measure of help or influx is not enough to make one repent or believe, which is enough to make another: the difference of souls, and temptations, and impediments plainly prove it. The same strength will not move a mountain, which will move a feather: nor the same teaching make

an ignorant sot to understand, which serveth a prepared person.

Bodily aptitude or ineptitude do much to vary receptivities; which are usually God's punishments or rewards for parents actions: and oft times for mens own. Some by gluttony, drunkenness, sports and idleness, make themselves even next to brutes.

But we have great reason from scripture to believe, that though God's laws and judgments are equal, where men do not make an inequality; yet as a free Lord and Benefactor, he dealeth not equally with all that are of equal merit: though he do no man wrong, nor deny any what he promised in his word, but keeps perfect justice as a governor; yet he may do with his own as he list, and he will be specially good to some, though others see it with an evil eye.

That which perplexes the minds of many is, they suppose that God being omnipotent, all his operations must be equally unresistable and efficacious, because none can conquer God; but they must consider, that though he be almighty, yet he doth not all that *he can do*: nor do his works equally manifest his omnipotency. And there are many causes for limiting his operations in the effects.

The chief is his wisdom and free-will. It is his will to do what he doth, and to do no more.

Another cause is, that God operateth by Jesus Christ, whose humanity is finite, being a creature ; and God worketh according to the instrument or medium , as he operateth by the sun, moon or stars, according to their several natures, and not according to his mere omnipotency, so doth he communicate grace by Jesus Christ.

And Christ by office being king and prophet, will operate by certain laws which in his sapiential government he sets down. And God will not violate those laws.

Also under Christ there are many subordinate causes ; there are his word, preachers, and all the forementioned means and helps : and Christ will work according to these means. Though he bind not himself from doing more or otherwise. This is his usual way. And the effect will be limited according to these second causes.

As the sun shineth on us first in and through the air, which abateth somewhat of its force ; and then through the exhalations, and then through the glass window, and each maketh some alteration as to the effect on us ; so is it in this case.

But the notable limitation is the foresaid indisposition of the receiver. Every eye hath a tunicle which the sun's light must penetrate : but he that hath a suffusion, or he that winketh, hath a greater impediment to limit the effect : so is it

with various degrees of indisposition, or moral incapacity, which yet are nothing if God did work *to the extent of his power*, and not as aforesaid, according to his free will and second causes.

### SECT. 15.

TO resist grace signifieth, 1. Either not to receive it passively; as a stone receiveth not the rain *ad intus*; or as oil resisteth water; or hard things receive not impressions as the soft. 2. Or not to receive actually, which is *receptio moralis*; as a man receiveth not a gift who consenteth not; or as he resisteth the light who will not open his eyes: the bare not consenting with the will, or not using the senses or organs, not opening the hand, &c. is such a resisting. 3. Or an active opposition, which is more; as a man resisteth an enemy, or by *nolition*, resisteth a suitor.

Man's sinful soul resisteth God's gracious operations all these ways. 1. It is passively become indisposed to reception: and thus he is said to have a *hard heart*, and a *seared conscience*, and to be dead and past feeling, Eph. iv. 18, 19, and iv. 1, 2.—2. It doth not do what it can do *morally* to receive grace, that is, it doth not excite itself to be willing of it. 3. It doth positively resist by action, and opposeth God's gracious operations.



He that repenteth not of his resisting of God's Spirit and grace, doth not understand and well repent of his sin.

All resisting is not overcoming: all resist grace, but all overcome it not, that is, do not frustrate it as to the final effect.

There are several degrees of yielding to God's motions and operations; and because God's grace moveth us to *more* than we ordinarily yield to, therefore we do ordinarily diminish its effect, even when we are happily overcome by it.

God worketh not alike on all: sometimes as on Paul he so suddenly changeth the mind and will, as that at once he both produceth the act of man's consent, and also taketh away even the moral power to the contrary in the antecedent instant. So that no man ever denieth consent who is so moved. And sometimes he procureth actual consent by such an operation, as in the antecedent instant might have been resisted and overcome, there being a moral power to the contrary. So that there is actually converting grace which was superable in the antecedent instant as to moral power: and there is such a converting grace as no man ever doth overcome.

Such grace of God as cometh from his absolute will or decree of the event, is never overcome. For God's decree is not frustrate.

God's gracious operations are never overcome

by any contrary act but what he himself is the cause of as an act ; for in him we live and move and are. Yet man is the only cause of the inordination of that act, by which it is set in opposition to God's other act : for God doth not militate against himself.

The case lieth thus : God antecedently to his laws, framed nature, that is, the being and natural order of all the world ; and so he is the head or root of all nature ; and as the preserver of nature continues to all things their proper powers and capacities. And man is one of his creatures, having a nature of his own, to which God as the God of nature doth antecedently concur. By this natural concurrence of God, the murderer, the thief, &c. are naturally able to do those acts : but being free agents that can do otherwise, God maketh them a law to restrain and regulate them. And when they break this law, they resist his gracious concurrence ; and they do this by their natural power and activity not used as God requireth, but turned against his own law. So that if God would withdraw his sustentation, and destroy mens nature, they could not resist his grace. But that he will not do, being his antecedent work : and so God is resisted by the power he himself gives, being abused in opposition to his grace.

The will of God which is thus resisted, is

only, 1. His preceptive or legal will, *de debito*.  
 2. His will of purpose, to give man so much help and no more by which he can and ought to believe and repent, which is said to be resisted or frustrated so far, when by man's fault it doth him not that good which it might have done.

God's grace and Spirit are said to be resisted when the word and other means are resisted which call him to his duty: for these are gifts and acts of grace.

But it is not the bare word or means alone, but the Spirit working in and by those means which is so resisted: for though no mortal man can clearly know how the Spirit concurrerth and operateth by the word and means, yet we may know, that God doth limit his own operation to the aptitude of the means ordinarily; and that he worketh with and by them, not according to his omnipotency in itself considered, but according to the means or organs. And as in nature he operateth but so far as is agreeable to the order and aptitude of natural causes; so in grace he operateth but according to the aptitude and order of the sapiential frame of means he hath constituted.

When the preaching of the word, education, connection and other visible means seem equal, God hath innumerable means, supernal, internal, external, invisible and unknown to us, by which

he can make all the difference that he maketh in men ; so that we cannot prove that ever he worketh on souls without any second causes or means at all, though we cannot prove the contrary : and he that resisteth all means, for ought we know, in so doing resisteth all God's gracious operations on his soul.

Therefore that God exerciseth his gracious operations sometimes in a resistible limited degree, is evidently proved :

In that, as all divines confess, in making the world, he hath not done *quantum potest*, but *quantum voluit*.

In that there are innumerable *possibilia quæ non sunt aut existentia aut futura*. God could have made the world sooner, or made more or fewer creatures of every species, than he hath done.

There is certainly *some* divine operation by his instituted means, which is limited to their instrumental aptitude.

And it is no dishonour to God's omnipotency to work thus limitedly and resistibly : for else he would be the author of his own dishonour, who freely diversifieth instruments, receptivities and effects throughout the world in wonderful variety.

If the total non-volitions, non-operations or forbearing to do what he could, as in all the innumerable possibles aforesaid, be no dishonour to

him ; then to will only *in tantum*, and to operate *hoc & hactenus*, limitedly and resistibly, is no dishonour : being more than not to will and work at all.

### Sec. 16.

We have before shewn that the faith by which we are justified is not a believing that we are justified, but a believing that we may be justified : not a believing that Christ is ours more than other mens, or that we shall be saved ; but a believing in Christ that he may be ours, and that we may be saved by him.

There is assurance in this faith ; not assurance that we are sincere, or shall be saved : but assurance that God's promises and all his words are true, and that he will perform them ; and that Christ is the Saviour of the world, and that the love of God is our end and happiness, and that all this is offered to us in Christ, even pardon and life, as well as to others ; which offer faith accepteth ; but the believer is oft uncertain of the sincerity of his own belief, and so of his salvation.

As to the certainty which christians have of divine revelation and scripture verity, it is not ordinarily complete and perfect, nor yet wavering and uneffectual, but such as will carry them in confidence of God's word to a holy life, and to

the forsaking of all other hopes, even life itself, for the hopes which are given by Christ: but objective certainty, which is the evidence of verity, is more full than our subjective certainty, for want of due receptivity in us, and is still the same in itself, though not equally brought or revealed to all.

Even doubting the truth of the scriptures and christianity may stand with saving faith and salvation, when it is not predominant, nor so great as to keep us from forsaking all for Christ and heaven.

No man ordinarily can be assured of his salvation or justification, without extraordinary revelation, but by being assured first of the truth of God's promise, and of his own sincerity in believing it: For his assurance is the result of this argument, Whosoever sincerely believeth and repenteth is justified; but I sincerely believe and repent; therefore I am justified. And the weakness of the apprehension of either of the premises is ever in the conclusion, which always followeth the weaker part.

Obj. A man cannot believe, and not know that he believeth. Ans. But a man may sincerely believe, and yet through ignorance either of the scripture or himself, be uncertain that indeed his faith is sincere, and such as is common to the justified.

Some protestants by erring in this point,

and saying that justifying faith is a certain persuasion or belief that we are justified, and that it is God's own word that I or you are actually justified, or are sincere believers, and that the believing this is properly *fides divina*, have greatly scandalised and hardened the papists, to our disgrace.

And so have those who say that in the creed, the meaning of " I believe the remission of sin" is, I believe that my sins are remitted actually. And that all must thus believe.

Some hold that the Spirit within them saith, that they are sincere believers, and that the word of the Spirit is the word of God, and to believe it is to believe God. But this is the enthusiasts conceit, which if true, all such have prophetic inspiration : for the Spirit to bring any new word from God is one thing, and to give us the understanding, love and obedience to what is already revealed, is another. The Spirit doth indeed assure us of our sincerity, but not by a new word from God to tell us so ; but by giving us that sincere faith itself, by acting and increasing it, by giving us the love of God and other graces, and the comfort of all. But the perception of these internal operations, is not properly called a belief of the word of God ; else when we make God's word the adequate object of faith, we shall be still at an uncertainty what that word is.

Obj. " A reprobate or devil may believe all the articles of faith without application : but justifying faith applieth Christ and his benefits to ourselves." Ans. It's true : but this application is not a certainty, nor a persuasion, nor a believing that I am justified, no more then that I am glorified, no nor that I shall be so neither : but it is an accepting of Christ offered that I may be justified and saved. So that here are all these applying acts in it. 1. I believe that Christ, as the Saviour of the world, is my Saviour as he is all other mens, and is not the devils ; that is, that he hath done that for me which he hath done for all mankind. 2. I believe he is offered to me personally in the promise or covenant of grace, on condition of believing acceptance ; and *that* with all his purchased benefits, and so for my justification. 3. I believe that if I so accept him, I shall be justified. 4. By true consent I do accordingly accept him to justify, sanctify and save me. But when all this is done, I do not believe that God hath said in his word that I am justified ; or that my faith is sincere ; and my faith may be so weak, that I may long doubt of that sincerity which I have, and so of my justification. And when I come to be certain of my faith, it is not by believing God, as saying, that I do certainly believe ; but by experience of its sincerity, upon just trial, by the Spirit's help.



They err on one extreme, who say, that all are commanded to believe that they are justified ; or any, as if it were God's word : and they err on the other hand, who command doubting or commend it, as if it were a duty or a benefit ; the truth is, doubting of our own sincerity and justification if we are sincere, is a sin of infirmity, and a calamity, proceeding from the want of a due acquaintance with ourselves, which we should use all possible diligence to obtain. But they that are not sincere are bound to know it ; and first to seek and get sincerity, and then discern it.

It is by the Holy Spirit that all christians must come to their assurance : but not by his speaking in us as a word from God, " thou art justified or shalt be saved, or art sincere." The Spirit is first Christ's agent and witness to assure us that he is the Saviour of the world ; and next he is a witness to assure us that we are God's adopted children ; which he doth by being in us God's mark, and the pledge, first fruits, and earnest of our heavenly inheritance, by effectually habituating our souls to the predominant love of God, and holiness and heaven. Wherever this sanctification is, there is the evidence and witness of our adoption. He that findeth by the fruits that he hath the Spirit, findeth the certain proof of his justification, and earnest of glory.

The predominant love of God and holiness, is so proper a fruit of the Spirit, that it is the very heart of the new creature, the sum of sanctification, as love is the sum of the law. So that to give the spirit of adoption to cry Abba Father, to sanctify, and to work in us the love of God and holiness, are three phrases of the same signification in the word of God.

Love being the final grace, and faith in Christ, but a means to it, the end must needs be more excellent than the means as such. And thus Paul giveth the pre-eminence to love.

Man hath a degree of fruition, or attainment of his ultimate end in this life, so far as he hath a delightful love of God : though this is but the foretaste and first fruits.

Therefore it is not by faith only that we know what heaven is, and are drawn to seek and hope for it : but also by this *earnest* and foretaste of love ; which worketh by a spiritual gust and sweet inward experience. The intellect first hath faith, and the will hath love : and a *promise* and *earnest* is more than a promise alone.

Though it be an ill expression of those schoolmen who say, *love is the form of every grace*, that which I suppose they mean is true : that love being the final grace, the rest as they are means to it, or the effects and expressions of it, are what they are partly in that relation : the means is a

means only by its aptitude to the end: and is never loved as such for itself, but for the end. And it is true, that no faith, no fear, no obedience, no suffering is further accepted of God, and a part of true holiness, nor will prove our salvation, than as it participateth of predominant love to God.

### Sec. 17.

NO man can be more certain of his final salvation, than he is certain of his perservance in faith and love.

Therefore it is a small number of christians comparatively that ever were absolutely certain of their salvation. For 1. No one that is uncertain of his sincerity is certain of his salvation. 2. No one that holdeth this doctrine, "That the saints who are justified may fall away, and that we cannot be sure of perseverance," can be sure of his own salvation. It's hard to conceive how he can be certain, who holdeth that no man can be certain: now those that hold this doctrine are, almost all the Papists, the Arminians, the Lutherans, and as far as I can learn by their writings, all the ancient writers for a thousand years after Christ.

Austin, Prosper and Fulgentius thought that

all the elect persevered as elect, being chosen to perseverance ; but that more were truly sanctified, justified, and in a state of salvation had they so died, than were elect : that all these fell away and perished. That no man could be certain whether or no he were elect, and should persevere. So that they denied all certainty of salvation by ordinary means. And that none of all the Greek or Latin fathers then, or long after, went further from the Pelagians than Austin did, I think I need not persuade any, who have read them.

This historical truth is useful to be known. From whence I infer, that it is possible for christians to live in settled peace and comfort, in respect to their heavenly felicity, without a certainty of perseverance and salvation. For to think that no Papists, no Greeks, no Arminians, no Lutherans, nor any of the ancient holy doctors, nor any of all the martyrs or other christians who held this uncertainty, did attain to such holy peace and comfort, is unreasonable, and contrary to all church history, and to experience.

And though it were a far more joyful state to have absolute certainty, yet reason and experience in other cases tell us, that without such certainty a man may live a joyful and peaceable life, where probability is strong enough to remove all reasonable cause of fearfulness, though there be a pos-

sibility of the worst. As we see that men in youth and health, though they may possibly die, or fall into torments the next hour, yet do not therefore cast off comfort, and live in such trouble as they would do if they had probable cause to expect it. There is no man sure but he may be executed among malefactors: and yet while there is no reason to expect it, a man may live a comfortable life. For mens affections follow the most powerful cause.

It is shameful self-delusion of some disputers, who think when they have once believed that certainty of salvation may be had, that they are then certain themselves, or next to certain of their own salvation. But he that hath no more certainty to be rich, or healthful, than to believe that health and riches may be got, is far from having them.

Who was more full of confidence and joy than Luther, and who speaketh more against the papists commanding men to doubt of the pardon of sin? Yet he, with Melancthon, and all the first protestants in the August. Confess. Art. 11. saith, " They condemn the anabaptists, who deny that those that are once justified can again lose the Holy Ghost."

If Adam in innocency had neither solid comfort, or cause of such, the state that we fell from was not so good as we commonly believe. But

Adam had no assurance of his perseverance in that state, for he fell from it.

It is too certain, by sad experience, that a true believer may lose much of the grace which he once had, and may die in a worse and weaker state.

It is certain by God's word, that the justified have need of warnings, that they fall not away, and of threatnings if they fall: and that they are obliged to fear it, by a cautelous preventing fear, that they may escape it.

It is certain therefore, that if the thing be denominated possible in relation to our own power, it is not only possible that we may fall away, but too certain that we should.

There have many of my acquaintance gone so far in a life of mortification, and of suffering like christians of the highest rank, who yet have fallen even to the denial of the essentials of the christian faith, that from the very doctrine of certain perseverance, they have become a cause of doubting and trouble to some; who have said, "If a man could fall away from true grace, I should not doubt but such and such men did so, and I should hope that yet my heart may at the present be sincere; but seeing no man ever had true grace who apostatizeth, these men had none, who in all probable judgment of reason, were once far better than I now am: and I can never be sure that I have true

grace, till I go further than ever they did, which I almost despair of ever doing ;” thus both sides of this controverted doctrine have their troubling difficulties.

If none censured the deniers of certainty herein, but only those who themselves have attained it, they would not be enough to make any great division or breach about it. And could we but be impartial, and bear with our dissenting brethren in this point, as well as we do with the ancient doctors and churches, our peace and concord would be less disturbed by this controversy than it is.

In all these things following, the parties are generally agreed, viz.

That Adam fell from true righteousness and holiness, and lost the spirit.

That therefore we cannot argue from the *nature* of holiness alone to prove that it cannot be lost.

Except Jerome truly accuse Jovinian with it, there is not that I know of, any father, christian, or heretick, for above a thousand years after Christ, who hath held that no truly justified persons fall finally away from grace and perish, even Augustine, Prosper, and Fulgentius not excepted.

It is confessed to be a sad clog to the contrary opinion, that it is held against the judgment of

the universal church for above a thousand years, and so seemeth to bear the imputation of novelty and singularity, though that be not a sufficient confutation of it.

It is confessed that the Greek and Roman church, the Lutherans and Arminians, are against this doctrine.

It is confessed that all these fathers and churches of old, and all these churches and christians of late, are not void of the comforts of the gospel.

It is confessed that the scripture hath many passages, so much seeming to favour both the opinions, as hath made the controversy thus difficult to so many learned godly men: and what the scripture is, it will be, to the world's end.

It is confessed that none can be sure of salvation or perseverance, who are not first sure of their sincerity, and justification.

And to be uncertain whether we are true believers, and justified, is more uncomfortable than to be sure of that, and uncertain of our perseverance.

It must be confessed that the doctrine that none fall from justification, hath its temptation also to discomfort, as before observed.

And likewise that if God should condemn those whom he before justified, it would argue no change in him or his word; but in them alone.



Lastly, that some justified persons, who live in as much sin as will stand with sincerity, are at present unfit for assurance of perseverance and salvation: for it would not stand with that humbling correction which they are then most fit for.

In all this the moderate are commonly agreed. On the other side, it is commonly granted that God forsaketh none till they forsake him.

And that so great is his goodness that no one who understandeth the grounds of the christian faith and hope, and who hath a predominant love of God and is willing to use means and avoid temptations, hath any reason to vex himself with any such fears, as consist not with a life of peace and comfort.

And where faith hath kindled so much love to God and heaven and holiness, that it is become a divine nature in the soul, and operateth as the love of children to parents, above mere reason, as a fixed habit, like a nature, then grace seemeth to some confirmed and not loseable.

All these concessions laid together shew, that though here the difference be real, it is in a point and a degree, where human frailty, and the difficulty, and non-necessity of a fuller understanding it, do fully prove to all sober christians, that it is their duty to bear with one another, without quenching brotherly love or denying christian

communion to each other : but the wicked will do wickedly, and none of the wicked will understand : but the wise shall understand. Dan. xii. 10.

### SECT. 18.

AS to the question, how great the sin must be which is inconsistent with true love to God, or holiness ? *that* belongeth to the controversy about mortal and venial sin ; where the difficulty is as great on one side as another ; so great, that not only pious Gerson, but many others have confessed it too hard for them well to solve.

In general, it is certain that all sin is so far mortal as to deserve death according to the law of nature and innocency, and so far as to make us need a pardon : though not so far as to be inconsistent with spiritual life and justification, and right to glory, and to make damnation due to us according to the law of grace. And protestants confess the distinction of mortal and venial sin, under the name of wickedness, or reigning sin, and sin of infirmity, in this sense, that mortal sin is that which is inconsistent with true faith, repentance, love, justification and right to life, and is never pardoned till the person be changed by true conversion : but venial sin or infirmity is that

which consisteth with all these aforesaid, and is pardoned by the covenant of grace, upon the actual or habitual repentance or hatred of it in the sinner.

The interruption of the act of divine love, will not prove a sin to be mortal. For though I detest such conclusions as the Jansenist gathereth from the Jesuits morals, that “loving God once or twice in a man’s life, or once a month, may save him,” yet it is certain that the love of God is not always in actual exercise in any : it is interrupted in our sleep, and in common studies and businesses which take up the whole man ; and therefore though some sin should interrupt it, that will not prove it to be a mortal sin.

And it is certain that a sin is not therefore mortal because it diminisheth the habit of love. For that may be in those that still are the justified children of God.

There are two degrees of mortal sin, as our divines at Dort do more than intimate : the one is, when sin putteth a man into the same state, as to the love of God, which he or any other was in, in the next degree before true justification, or sanctification or conversion : which is when the habit of divine love, and all other saving grace is so far lost, as that habitually the creature is more loved than the creator : If any fall thus far (which is the controversy) then it’s granted that their

justification, adoption and right to heaven, is lost. But while God is habitually dearest to the soul, and sin is habitually more hated than loved, there sin is habitually repented of; and for my part I do not think that person is unjustified, or should be damned if he so died.

The other degree, the said divines take to be some heinous act or sin like David's or Peter's, which destroyeth not the habit, but is so great, that the person, though he lose not his fundamental right, yet is put into an immediate ineptitude and incapacity of heaven, and his right so suspended, that he cannot have possession till that hindrance be removed by true repentance.

If you ask them whether that man shall go to heaven or hell if he so die; they tell you that it is not to be supposed; for God hath decreed that he shall not so die, but shall repent, which Austin, will say of all the elect, and sometimes he half dreamed of purgatory for some such.

The true reason why such an heinous sin must be actually repented of before full pardon and capacity for heaven, and the true note to know what sins must have such actual repentance, and so are thus far mortal is this; there are some sins so easily known to be sins, and so notoriously calling the conscience to repent, that to lie in them unrepented of long when the sudden violent temptation and passion is over, and a man hath

portunity to act according to his settled habits, will not consist with the truth of such a habit of love and holiness, and of hatred of sin. This is my judgment of this difficult case: he that can open it better, deserveth all our thanks.

But the very act of repentance hath such various degrees, that those also here deserve our consideration. For he that hath the habit of holiness, no doubt hath some degree of repentance secretly stirring in him before it cometh to deep repentance and open confession; I do not think that David was without all remorse and repentance till Nathan spake to him, though his repentance was not such as the quality of his sin required.

In gross known sin, repentance is not true unless it contain a resolution presently to forsake it. He that is unresolved, though he have much remorse and trouble of mind, is not truly penitent: nor he that is resolved only to forsake it sometime hereafter, or when he hath sinned once more, but not at the present.

And as this is true of actual repentance, so a true habit must be such as is the habit of such acts, even an habitual love to present holiness, and an habitual hatred to present sin, which in the course of our lives doth actually determine and preserve us, however a violent temptation interrupt that course.

But whether every known sin of the smallest

sort, have always such resolutions of present forsaking it in all that are truly penitent, is a harder question. Many a godly man is frequently angry sinfully, and sluggish sinfully, and daily useth some idle words, and ungoverned and idle thoughts, and is sinfully remiss in the degrees of every duty, and knoweth all this to be sin : and if he resolved presently to do so no more, he would not do so again so frequently as he doth : in such a case it is exceeding hard to judge a man's repentance : and yet alas, whose case is it not ? we have a dislike of the sin, and a wish that we were delivered from it : but that is but a desire that we loved it less, and hated it more ; and proveth not that our hatred is sufficient. For many a man that liveth in gross sin, doth wish that his heart were turned from it, and did not love it, when it is not so turned. And why will the same wish then serve about lesser sins ? And yet if present resolution against every small sin be necessary to pardon, alas, who is pardoned ?

And if the case must be resolved by the magnitude or smallness of the sin, what bounds shall we ever be able to assign, and what understanding is able to distinguish between the sin so great which must be presently resolved against in order to pardon, and the sin so small as may be pardoned without such resolution ? whether in speech every idle word be such ? if not, whether every idle jest, or passionate word ? or backbiting word, (the

ordinary sin of many strict professors,) or every sinful oath, or curse, or slander? who can say, it is this, and not that? And so in all commissions and omissions.

And it will still remain exceeding difficult, what resolutions against sin will prove true repentance: for as many a child under correction, so many an adult sinner on his sick bed, or under a terrifying sermon, or conviction, not only seemeth, but doubtless is, as passionately resolved at the present to forsake his sin, as a godly man himself: and yet quickly loseth all that resolution, and liveth in the sin which he resolved to forsake.

By this it would seem that it is not true resolution which causeth not the ordinary forsaking of the sin. For to resolve to-day, and sin to-morrow, is but to play with sin, and not to repent or mortify it. And yet if actually forsaking of all sin be necessary, who then is penitent or can be saved? For there is no man that doeth good, and sinneth not; and in many things we offend all. Who leaveth all the idle thoughts, and words, and negligence, &c. which he knoweth to be sin? And the most understanding men then would be saved with difficulty in comparison of the ignorant.

And yet no doubt, those sins which are materially small, may have such circumstances, as make them more malignant than some greater

matter : as when they are committed through malignant contrivances and ends, or in gross contempt, or negligence. So that this also maketh the decision of the case more difficult.

And it will be hard, not only to know which and how great the sins must be which are unpardoned if lived in without forsaking, or without resolving to forsake them presently if known ; but also how great, and what sins unknown may stand with saving grace. For surely if men should ignorantly reproach or reject God or Christ, or the Holy Ghost, or live in murder, adultery, perjury, &c. not knowing them to be sins, this would not stand with saving grace : and yet to live in some unknown sin may.

And it is hard to know how oft a gross sin may be committed in consistence with true habitual grace ? And how oft the resolution of the will may change, without the loss of holy habits. The tempter will say to David or Peter, if once, why not twice ? If twice why not thrice ? And who but God can say, just how oft ? And yet to set no bounds confoundeth the just and unjust, good and bad, and maketh sanctification but a name. And to say that Peter's faith did totally fail, or that he was wholly deprived of saving grace, is rash, and an unlikely thing.

And it must be remembered that the will is always in the time of sinning more for the com-



mitting the sin, than against it actually, or else it would not be committed: and in omission, it is not prevalently for the duty, else it would be done. And if it were habitually so too, as to a holy or a sinful life, the person were unholy. And when the will (known by the practice,) is sometimes actually more for a gross sin than against it, and daily actually more for small sins than against them, it is very difficult to discern certainly that the contrary habit is our state.

And it is a further difficulty to determine, whether the habit of love and holiness may not be predominant, and yet the very habit of some one sin as well as the act be stronger than the contrary habit: for a daily use of the acts seemeth to prove a prevalent habit. As a habit of anger, of vain jesting, &c. And if a habit of one sin may be prevalent, though not of all others, it will be hard to say either how great that sin may be, and so whether a habit of lust, of pride, of covetousness, may stand with grace, in that prevalency or yet whom any sins may be habitually prevalent, in a sanctified man. But if no one, what shall those think of themselves that live in the daily act of smaller sins before mentioned? And that they err who tell us that all sin is equally mortified in the habit, common experience fully proveth. But such men use not to distinguish between the general habit of love to good and hatred to evil, which

is as the trunk of the tree to the branches, which may have their particular cankers and diseases, and is indeed virtually a habit of all good, and against evil; and the particular habits of good and evil which are also found in every soul.

Yea the difficulty is yet greater, by our ignorance of the very nature of a habit of the will, or of that inclination of it to good or evil which is antecedent to the act: which, he that hath read the schoolmen and metaphysicks, or ever well studied it himself, will discern to be almost beyond the reach of our understanding. That it is a dispositive promptitude to act, we feel: but whether that disposition be itself a secret unobserved immanent act, disposing to the more open-perceptible act; for the soul is never out of action, and certainly hath at one instant several acts, of which that *de fine* is oft unobserved, and yet most powerful; as a traveller that is taken up with other thoughts and talk would never hold on his way if the end were not actually intended, though he feel it not: Or whether it be the natural inclination of the will corroborated? and what that inclination is? whether it lie much in a receptive disposition of the acted faculties, by which they are still ready to receive the active motion of the agent power; as the receptivity of the fuel causeth the greatness and constancy of a flame; or the opening of the window, the shining in of the sun;

or the composition of the adapted wheels, causeth the clock or watch to be easily and truly moved by the poise or spring; or what else it is that we call a habit, is not so easily known as unstudied confident disputers think.

The chief trial of a man's holiness and repentance is by the main scope and business of his life; when a man is concious that God, holiness, and heaven, are his great end, which are dearer to him and more powerful with him than all things sensible, or the interest of the flesh; and when he can and doth deliberately forsake whatever stands in opposition to or competition with God and glory, and so as to the course of his life, doth live by faith, and not by sense, this is the true evidence of real conversion; and no sins are damning which consist with this.

But because the truth of this must be discerned, not only by present sense and resolution, but by practice to prove that resolution true, therefore no man can be certain of the sincerity of his resolutions, but by the practice of willing universal obedience, forsaking gross and wilful sinning, performing necessary duty, striving to overcome infirmities, and heartily desiring perfect holiness, upon terms of mortification, self-denial and diligent use of means.

Therefore much sinning will at least breed much doubtfulness and uncertainty of justification

and salvation, and till it be forsaken no' such certainty will be had.

### Sec. 19.

I conclude therefore, that certainty of justification and sincerity is not the lot of weaker christians, but of the more confirmed only. By weak christians, I mean not those that have weak natural parts and are deficient in common gifts, but those that have weak faith, hope, love, humility, &c. For grace is not certainly discernible in very low degrees, when it is little in action, much clouded and oft conquered by its contrary : but only when it is strong and in a good degree, much in act, and conquereth opposition.

This being the case about certainty of justification ; as to the certainty of perseverance might a man judge by the conveniences, it would draw us to think that the middle way of the Dominicans, and some others, were the right : viz. " That a low degree of true saving grace is sometimes lost finally, and such perish ;" but " that they who obtain confirming grace by a greater degree, do never lose it." This would save christians from that uncomfortable thought " I must go farther than ever such and such a one did who fell away, and had lived strictly and suffered pa-

tiently, or I cannot be saved." For if this be true, a man may be saved who goeth no further, or not so far as some have done that fell away. This will keep men from security and presumption in a state of weakness; and in a necessary fear of falling away, that they may avoid it. And yet it provideth a certainty of perseverance and salvation, for strong christians who are, and perhaps they only, fit for and capable of it. And it tendeth to make men long for and press towards a strong confirmed state. I only say that if this doctrine were true, it would have these conveniences.

He that sinneth as much as ever will stand with grace, and as ever he dare for fear of losing all, is under so great obligations and necessity to be humbled, to fear, to be penitent and deeply sensible of his great ingratitude, that he is not fit for the joy of assurance of salvation; and therefore not fit for assurance itself: he that is certain to be saved, must rationally be full of joy; which is unseasonable to one that should lie in the tears of deep humiliation. For he who loveth God and holiness, in the weakest measure consistent with salvation, must have all other graces and comforts in proportion, or else there will be a monstrous inequality. Besides this certainty is the product of other graces, and a feeble cause will not bring forth an effect so much stronger than itself. God's wisdom in government will not en-

courage any in fits of contempt, neglect or disobedience, by such assurance. How can he more reward and encourage the best? And if every true christian should have certainty of salvation, when he sinneth as foully, as frequently, and liveth as slothfully as ever will stand with sincerity, it would tempt such to go on in sin, and be no better. God hath his castigatory punishments for sinful children; even to death itself sometimes; and much desertion. And who should have such corrections, but the worst of his children? but the certainty of their salvation, useth not to suit with such correction and desertion; or at least is forfeited in such a case. Lastly, experience telleth us, that it is not God's will that the worst of his children, no nor any but the better sort, should have such assurance: for *de facto* they have it not. And in the nature of the thing it is quite out of their reach.

I confess it is a great comfort to doubting fearful souls, if they can soundly thus argue, "I am sure I had true grace once, and I am sure none such fall quite away: therefore I am sure I have it still." But this can be the comfort of comparatively few, because that very sense of sin which maketh a christian doubt of his present sincerity, is apt to make him doubt as much of his former. And though that comfort which is fetched from former perceived sincerity, I think is due to those who

are under causeless and melancholy fears, yet it is not fit for every christian who happens to have doubts respecting himself. For if a man be fallen as much as will consist at all with sincerity, suppose into gross sin, it is not safe for that man to argue, "I am sure I once was sincere in my obedience, therefore I am sure I am so still:" but by repentance he must make sure that he *is* truly obedient, that he may be sure he *was* so.

## DIALOGUE I.

*Eulabes, Sophron, and Philodorus.*

EULABES. **S**IR, I am now come to you in a greater straight than ever: I have met with a teacher who tells me you are a deceiver, and have all this while misled me, and have taught me to build upon the sand of my own righteousness, and set me on doing to my undoing; and that I have not built on the righteousness of Christ, and therefore all will end in my overthrow and ruin; I was not able to answer him; and I have prevailed with him to come to you, that I may hear you speak together.

SOPHRON. Did not I tell you before hand of such temptations, and give you instructions to guard you against them?

EUL. I confess you did: but I find myself insufficient to use them when it comes to trial.

SOP. The truth is, younger christians will still need the help of their elders, and of Christ's ministers, though they have been never so well fore-armed; as you need a physician in your



sickness, after all the preventing directions which he can give you. And you have done well to bring him, and to hear both sides together. Had you trusted to your own understanding, and only disputed it out privately with himself, you might have been ensnared to your danger. I shall willingly confer with him on these two conditions: 1. That it is *you* and not *him* that I am to satisfy: and therefore when I have satisfied you I have done: for to follow him as long as he will talk, will waste more time than we have to spare. 2. That when you are delivered from this snare, you will remember that you must meet with many more such in the world: the anabaptist will say as much to you for his way, and the papist much more for his way; and most of them will affright you with the danger of damnation, if you turn not to them: therefore whenever you are assaulted by any of them, bring them to me, and hear us together, as you now do.

PHILODOXUS. I am sorry to see how you abuse poor souls, and build them not on Christ, but on themselves! What a deal have you said to this man of doing and of working, and how little of believing? You have set him on tasks of duty and he thinketh now to be saved by his own works; his repenting, his praying, his keeping the Lord's day, &c. while the poor man knoweth not Jesus Christ, and submitteth not to the righteousness

of God. You will needs be a teacher of the law and bring back poor souls to bondage, that Christ may profit them nothing ; but trusting to their own works and righteousness for life, they may fall from grace, and be found in their nakedness and sin.

SOP. Sir, these general exclamations do but tell me there is something that you differ from me in, but shew me not what it is. If you are a lover of truth, and will speak to edification, tell me distinctly what are the points of my doctrine which you dislike ; and what you would have me believe and teach in their stead.

PHI. First then, you should believe and teach that all our own righteousness is as filthy rags, abominable to God, and to be cast away with our sins : and that we are neither to trust to, nor to look at any thing in ourselves, for justification, or acceptance with God, or to procure eternal life : but that Christ hath both satisfied for our sins, and fulfilled the law of innocency for us. God imputed our sins to him, and he was by imputation the greatest sinner in the world ; for the sins of all the elect did meet upon him, and were his : therefore he was forsaken of God, and suffered the same hell that we deserved. And God imputeth all his satisfaction and righteousness so to us, as that in God's account all the elect did satisfy and fulfil all the law in and by Christ :

for he was our surety, and our legal person, though not our natural person. So that what Christ was we were, and what Christ did we did, and what Christ suffered we suffered, in God's account or imputation: and so we are as righteous as Christ himself, because all Christ's righteousness is ours. And we have no other, nor need any other righteousness, in order to our justification: this righteousness of Christ is it by which we are justified by the law of works, which saith, obey perfectly, or do this and live; for we did all that is required in and by Christ: in this righteousness only God accepteth us; we have right to it from eternity by God's decree of election: and our consciences perceive our right upon our believing: and to set men on doing *for* life, when they should only do *from* life, is to deceive them and undo them.

SOP. If these words did offer me any light which I had not before, I should gladly learn, and give you thanks. But if such talk as this, be all that must shew you to be wiser than your neighbours, and warrant you to rail at them as legal preachers, and such as teach justification by works, my soul must pity you, and all such as are troubled or seduced by you. But because this head containeth many particular doctrines, I pray you let us speak to them in order.

And first about our own righteousness. And

seeing I am the learner, I must crave your answer as fitted to my doubts. And first let me ask you, do you know how many times the words, *just*, *righteous* and *righteousness* are used in the bible?

PHI. No: I have not taken such an account as to tell you.

SOP. Let us see the concordance. Here you find them about six hundred and twelve times used, besides the words justify, justifying and justification. Shew me how many of these six hundred texts do not speak of such inherent or personal righteousness, as is distinct from such as you describe in your sense of imputation.

Try whether one of twenty or forty or an hundred have such a sense.

PHI. Not if such false teachers as you must be the expositor of them.

SOP. Let us try some of them, and be you the expositor. 1 John ii. 29. *Every one which doth righteousness is born of God.* 1 John iii. 7, 10. *He that doth righteousness is righteous. Whosoever doth not righteousness is not of God.*

PHI. You choose out those texts which countenance your own ends.

SOP. My question is but, whether the scriptures speak of any righteousness which consisteth in any thing that is in ourselves.

PHI. Yes: that cannot be denied: but not in order to our justification.

SOP. Of the use we must speak anon. I next ask you then whether all these texts be not true? and whether we may not speak as they do?

PHI. Yes: we question not the truth, but the meaning of them.

SOP. Is this righteousness as such, abominable to God? Doth not God command it? and require us to obey his laws sincerely? And doth he hate the obedience of his law? Is not holiness his nature and image in us? And doth he hate his image? Is it not the character of a wicked man, yea the Devil himself, to hate holiness? and can you think that God doth so? What! he that hath said, be holy, for I am holy, and without holiness none shall see God!

PHI. If you were not an unholy deceiver, you would not intimate by such questions, as if I took God to be a hater of holiness.

SOP. Is it not holiness which the scripture and we mean by inherent righteousness?

PHI. But God hateth it not as holiness, but as mixt with sin.

SOP. Do you believe, and love God sincerely, and love the godly, or not?

PHI. Better than such as you do, or else woe to me.

SOP. And doth God hate all your faith and love because it is mixt with sin? if he do, what difference between it and wickedness? or between you and a wicked man? God can but hate what *they* do: and doth he so by all that *you* do also? why then may not your neighbours imitate God, and hate all that you do? why may they not deride and persecute you, for that which is hateful to God? for shame never more blame then your scorers or persecutors.

PHI. I do not say that God hateth my faith, love, humility and patience *as such*, but as mixt with sin. Therefore properly it is sin that God hateth, and not my faith and love itself.

SOP. And is all come to this? what mean you then to rail at us that say the same? we all say that God hateth our sin, and the faulty imperfection of our holiness and obedience? and what say you more?

PHI. But you say not that God hateth your righteousness for the sin that cleaveth to it, as we do. Your goodness is like an apple fallen into the dirt or poisoned: and you are for wiping it, and keeping it: but God and wise men abhor it for the filth, and cast it away.

SOP. Then it seems you cast away all love to God and man, all faith, all honesty and obedience, because sin cleaveth to it.

PHI. By casting it away, I do not mean giv-

ing over to love God and obey him, and turning wickedly to the contrary; but I mean that I count it dung in order to my justification.

SOP. I perceive by teaching me, you are but learning to speak yourself. I further ask you doth not God love the faith, love, obedience and holiness of his servants, notwithstanding all their faults and imperfections. John xvi. 27. *The Father himself loveth you, because you have loved me and believed, &c.* 2 Cor. ix. 7. *God loveth a cheerful giver.* Psalm ix. 7. *The righteous Lord loveth righteousness:* with many the like passages. Doth he not love his image?

PHI. That is, because we are in Christ; and our persons and graces and duties are accepted all in him, being perfumed with his righteousness, and all our sins and imperfections pardoned and covered thereby: and as our graces are the works of the Holy Ghost, and not primarily as ours.

SOP. Are you come so far already? all this is held not only by us, but by many papists also. You confess then, that for the merits of Christ's righteousness, our sins are pardoned, and not only our persons, but our faith, love and obedience, accepted and loved, though culpably imperfect and mixt with sin. And so all your noise is come to nothing, and you say as we do. But having found that we must have inherent righ-

teousness, let us next consider what use we may make of it, and how far it may and must be valued and trusted to. And tell me whether God hath made any promise of a reward to it, or not? turn to the word *reward* in your concordance, if you remember not the texts, and see.

PHI. Your legal principles and spirit make the scriptures a snare and a stumbling block to you, as Christ himself is. When God talketh of reward metaphorically, you take it properly, as if we could merit any thing of God.

SOP. I only ask you whether God hath promised us a reward.

PHI. Yes: but it is a reward properly to Christ, and not to ourselves.

SOP. When Christ saith, *Great is your reward in Heaven: and your father shall reward you openly*, Matt. v. 12. & vi. 4, 6. and you shall not lose your reward; and Heb. xi. 26. he had an eye to the recompence of reward; and Heb. ii. 6. *God is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, &c. is the meaning, great is Christ's reward in heaven, and God will reward Christ openly, and is a rewarder of Christ only as diligently seeking him? &c.

PHI. You would make me ridiculous. I mean that it is for Christ's merits or righteousness, and not for any thing in us or done by us, that we are rewarded.



SOP. Say you so? doth *diligent seeking him*, Heb. xi.6. and *praying and giving alms in secret*, Matt. vi. 1—4. and *suffering for Christ*, and Matt. v. 11, 12. *feeding, visiting, &c. Christ in his members*, xxv. &c. mean only that which Christ did, and not we? Is it Christ's prayers, and alms, and charity, and sufferings, that the text meaneth? look over many such texts and judge.

PHI. Still you would make my words contemptible. It is our duties that are rewarded, but it is not for themselves or any worth that is in them, but for the merits of Christ only.

SOP. If God have no respect to any thing in our duties in his reward, tell me why are they so often said to please him? for we are commanded to *do those things that please him*; and *he heareth us because we do those things that please him*. And why doth he not for Christ's merits reward our sinning, our folly and vanity, or all our natural indifferent actions, equally with our obedience? And why do you and all men reward a dutiful child, more than one that will scorn you and spit in your face? And why do all princes and rulers make any difference between the righteous and the wicked, a rogue and an honest man? And why do churches so strictly try the godliness of their members? Why do you make any difference in your communion? What meaneth church discipline? And why are you yourselves so desirous

to be esteemed godly persons, and differenced from others, if God himself make no difference? And how is the righteous more excellent than his neighbour? And why is it made the mark of a faithful man, *Psa. xv. 4. That a vile person is contemned in his eyes, but he honoureth them that fear the Lord*, if there be nothing in holiness and obedience any more than in sin, for God to reward?

PHI. You delight to make me seem foolish, by your cavilling! You might easily understand that I did not mean that good works are no more rewardable than those that are evil or indifferent, but that they are not rewarded for their proper worthiness, as being faulty, and so unjustifiable with God; but it is for the merits of the righteousness of Christ, imputed to believers.

SOP. When you understand what you should say, you will speak intelligibly: but be not angry that your confusion is laid open to you. About merit and imputation we must speak distinctly afterwards. That no works of ours are rewardable till their faultiness is pardoned, nor rewardable according to the law of innocency, nor upon any terms but those of the covenant of grace, this we hold as firmly as you do. We dream not of any access to God but by a Mediator, nor of any acceptance of ourselves or our duties, but on the account of Christ's merits and intercession, by which the sins of our best works are pardoned,

and life eternal freely given to obedient believers. Of the worthiness of our works we must speak more anon.

P<sup>H</sup>I. I see whereabout you are : You make us hear the pope that is in your belly : you mean as the papist, that Christ hath merited that your works shall be meritorious.

S<sup>O</sup>P. Hath not Christ merited that our holy love and obedience be rewarded ?

P<sup>H</sup>I. Yes : but what's that to merit ?

S<sup>O</sup>P. Hath he not by his merit made them rewardable ?

P<sup>H</sup>I. Yes, or else how can they be rewarded ?

S<sup>O</sup>P. Do you not know that by merit the papists themselves profess that they mean nothing but rewardableness ? At least do we protestants mean any thing else by it ?

P<sup>H</sup>I. What the papists or you *mean*, you best know yourselves ; but I know what you say : and you both talk like the ignorant enemies of grace.

S<sup>O</sup>P. Do you include the Jansenists who say that all Christ's grace now is nothing but his irresistible efficient operation of holy love in the soul : and that God moveth us to it necessarily or insuperably ? and that he now giveth no grace merely sufficient, which is not effectual ? and that he

leaveth nothing to our free-will in Christ's gracious operations.

PHI. I do not believe that any papist is so much for free grace.

SOP. But if you deny it, and the book be opened, and it be found there written, is it nothing to you to be found in falsehood?

PHI. But I say not as Jansenius, that it is the law written in us, but Christ's righteousness imputed to us, which is our righteousness.

SOP. Did you not even now confess an inherent righteouss?

PHI. Yes: but not to our justification.

SOP. Of that more anon: by justification, they mean making us holy.

PHI. But Jansenius is not a common papist: why tell you me of him?

SOP. My business here is not to justify the papists: but to know your meaning. You appear to me not well to understand what the doctrine of the papists is.

PHI. I am not ashamed to be a stranger to their books: but I will bring one when you will, that shall open the abomination of their doctrine of merit; till then it is you to whom I speak.

SOP. Content: we will make another day's work of that. Tell me then whether it be names or things that you make so much ado about?

PHI. Both: we like not ill names: and

worse false doctrine.

SOP. What are the names that displease you? Is *reward* or *rewardableness* one?

PHI. No: if you will understand them well: for they are scripture words.

SOP. Is *worthiness* one of them?

PHI. Yes: if you will say that we are worthy of the reward or of salvation.

SOP. Do you not know that the scripture usually so speaketh? Rev. iii. 4. *They shall walk with me in white for they are worthy: 2 Thes. i. 5, 11. Worthy of the kingdom of God: 1 Thes. ii. 12. Walk worthy of God: Luke xx, 35. That are accounted worthy to obtain that world—xxi. 36. That you may be counted worthy to escape all these things, &c. Matt. x. 11. He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.—xxii. 8. They which were bidden were not worthy. Acts xiii. 46. Ye judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life.—Is not this scripture?*

PHI. By *worthy* the text meaneth not *merit*, but *fitness* to receive.

SOP. Our question is not now of the meaning, but of the name, you know.

PHI. I am not against the scripture names, if well understood.

SOP. *Merit* is a name I perceive that you are against, and we make so small a matter of

words, that you shall choose any other name of the same signification, and we will forbear this, rather than offend you: but yet tell me, what if the words ἀξίον and ἀξία were translated *deserving* and *merit*, would it not be as true a translation as worthy and worthiness, when it is the very same thing that is meant? Nay, when *merit of condignity* is the highest kind, which the papists themselves mention and are reprov'd for, do you not hereby imply that condignity is a bigger word than bare merit? And I ask you, whether all the ancient teachers of the churches since the apostles, whose writings are come down to us, do not familiarly apply these names ἀξία and *meritum* to believers? And if you persuade men that all these teachers and churches were papists, you will persuade most that believe you to be papists too: but such is the success of over-doing! And I would know, whether in common speech, reward, and merit or desert, be not relatives, as master and servant, husband and wife are? Is there any reward which is not *meriti præmium*, the reward of merit? What mean you yourself else by the word reward?

PHI. I mean God's free gift without respect to merit or desert.

SOP. Doth not the usage of the world distinguish between a *mere gift* and a *reward*? What if you give money to the next man you meet

without respect to any thing in him, will you call it a reward? Review all the scripture texts that speak of a reward, and see whether they have no relation to any foregoing act in man.

PHI. Well: but rewards are God's second gifts as they follow the former, without respect to worthiness or merit.

SOP. That cannot be neither: if an infidel's life be first preserved, and then the gospel given him, is this a reward?

PHI. No: but a reward supposeth only our fitness to receive a free gift.

SOP. Do you mean our natural fitness or our moral? A man is naturally fit for his food, when he is hungry: will you say therefore that his food is his reward for being hungry?

PHI. Well: call it a moral fitness if you will: but what is that to merit?

SOP. It is so much to it, as to tell the world that such as you, do revile others for holding the same which you are forced to profess yourself, and wrangle about mere words, and know it not. For by merit is meant nothing else but *a moral aptitude for reward*.

But tell me next what word will you choose to serve instead of merit, that we may agree in it?

PHI. I know not what words to use that please you, when we are not agreed about the

thing signified : I hold not any reward in proper sense, but only free gift, and therefore how can I tell you what word to use instead of merit ? I think the word reward is used but figuratively.

Sop. It is written, Matt. vi. 4, 6. *Your father which seeth in secret shall reward you openly* : Col. iii. 24. *Ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance* : Heb. x. 35. *Cast not away your confidence which hath great recompence of reward* :—xi. 26. *He had respect to the recompence of reward* : *He that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him* : Matt. xvi. 27. *He shall reward every man according to his works*. I ask you again, what is meant here by rewarding ?

If it be a metaphor, I ask you the meaning and reason of the name. If because it followeth our duty, then every gift that so followeth is a reward, without any further respect to that duty, than the order of time : but that you denied before. If you mean, that it is called a reward, as being a sign only of God's approbation, then if God should tell men that he approveth of their duty, it would be a reward, though he immediately annihilate them, or should never do them any good : which I think you will not say. But if you hold that all three must concur, viz. that it be, 1. A benefit or gift, 2. Following duty, 3. Signifying



an approbation of it, you come almost up to all that is asserted by them that you quarrel with. Therefore when you have talked all you can devise, you must say, there is some fitness in the duty for this approbation and benefit, and that the relation of the gift to that fitness, is that which denominateth it a reward.

But we are gone from our question *de nomine*, and have already dispatched also that *de re* : what more have you to offer ?

PHI. Seing you like not my explications, tell me plainly what you hold yourselves, and then I shall better know whether we differ in sense or words only.

SOP. It isto be wished for the churches sake, you would have understood that first, before you reviled us as legal, and not have spoken evil of what you understand not. But it is better now, than not at all. Our judgment is as followeth :

That God hath three essential attributes, which he expresseth and glorifieth in his works ; his *vital power* or activity, his *wisdom*, and his *will* or *love* : that all these operate conjunctly ; but yet each appeareth eminently in its special effects : that God's *power* eminently appeareth in the *being* and *motion* of things ; and his *wisdom* eminently in their *order*, and his *love* in their *goodness* and *perfection* : that accordingly he is, the

first *efficient*, the chief *dirigent*, the ultimate *final* cause of all.

That he is related to us, 1. As our *Creator*, the cause of our being and natural motion; or as the fountain of nature, where power is most eminent. 2. As our *Governor*, and the God of order, and the *dirigent* cause; where all attributes concur, but wisdom is most eminent. 3. As our bounteous *Benefactor*, and most amiable good and end, where goodness or love is most eminent.

That neither man, angel, or any creature can possibly have any good but by God's gift, and this gift must needs be free, seeing the creature hath nothing to give him that can add to him, or but what is absolutely his own.

God is to us our owner, ruler, and benefactor, antecedently, and no man can merit of God as he is an owner or a mere benefactor; for so he freely disposeth of his own; therefore it is blasphemy to hold that man or angel can merit of God in point of proper commutative justice, which giveth in exchange one thing for another, to the benefit of the receiver: for as is said, God cannot receive any addition to his perfection, nor have we any thing but his own to give him.

Man's duty therefore meriteth only in point of governing distributive justice: and not every way neither in respect of that; for governing jus-

tice is distinguished according to the law we are under, which is either, the law of innocency, or the law of grace : and no man since the fall can merit of God according to the rigour of the law of innocency, which exacteth personal perfection.

The law of grace is in its first notion, a free gift of Christ, pardon, and right to life eternal to all that will accept it believingly as it is offered, that is, according to the nature of the gift. And this gift or conditional promise and pardon no man can merit : for Christ's perfect righteousness and sacrifice hath already merited it for us ; and so hath left us no such work to do : nor is there the least place for any human merit or rewardableness from God, but on supposition of Christ's meritorious righteousness, and of this free gift or promise of pardon and life, already made to us without our desert.

But yet this is not a mere gift, but also a true law : God is still our God and Governor, and Christ is Lord of all, Rom. xiv. 9. He that is a king and ruler hath his laws and judgments : that which is a gift in the first respect, hath its condition and many commanded duties, and so is a law of grace in other respects. And it is only in respect to this law of grace that man is rewardable, or can merit.

The gift considered in itself, is from God as

benefactor, but it is from God as sapiential rector, as to the order and reason why one man rather than another receiveth it. So that we merit not of God as benefactor nor as rector by the law of innocency, but only of God as rector by the law of grace, which regulateth the reception of his free gifts, merited by the perfect righteousness of Christ; and so only as to the order and reason why one more than another receiveth that free gift.

As if a father hath many sons, one living obediently, the rest prodigals, of whom only one thankfully receives the pardon and grace freely offered by the father, which the others scornfully refuse: here both the obedient and the penitent son, have all upon free gift, as to commutative justice; but on various terms: and yet both merit in point of paternal governing justice; but very differently: one meriteth of strict paternal justice; the other only of a forgiving father, quite on other terms: and it is a comparative merit, by which he is fitter for pardon than the sons that despise it.

God as a benefactor and a governor, giveth some benefits antecedently to any duty of man: and these cannot be a reward to us; but other benefits are given by God both as benefactor and legislator, upon condition of some duty of ours, and so in the judicial sentence and execution,

that duty is rendered as the reason of our actual right to them ; and these are a reward.

Our first reception of right to pardon and life through Christ, being given on the condition of penitent acceptance in faith, may be called a reward, because they are consequent gifts on condition : but since the condition is so slender a thing as the thankful acceptance of a free gift, divines agree not of the fitness of the name, while they wholly agree about the thing. But our after mercies and final glory, being promised on the condition of such a faith as worketh by love and obedience, they have more unanimously agreed, not only of the thing itself, but that the names of reward and rewardableness, of merit and worthiness are here fit, only used in the fore-explained sense.

By all which it is obvious, that we are not at all the less, but the more indebted to God, for the merit or rewardableness of our actions ; for as all the benefit is free gift, so it is of his grace that we do any thing that is good, and that he accepteth it as rewardable : and if it be an honour to a man to be good rather than bad, and the righteous be more excellent than his neighbour, it is an addition of mercy that God will honour those that honour him, and commandeth others so to do, Psa. xv. 4.

And now the case is very plain, both that re-

ward and rewardableness, called merit, there is, and why it is and must be so.

How can God be a governor, and have a law, and be a judge, and righteous in all this, if faith and godliness be not rewardable? It is the second article in our faith, and next to believing, that there is a God, *that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him*, Heb. xi. 6. And when you would extirpate all faith and godliness on pretence of crying down merit, you may see what overdoing tends to.

There is manifestly a reward even in this life Matt. xix. 29. Who would change the profit and pleasure of a holy life here, for that of the contrary?

Reward and rewardableness are found in the very law of nature itself; in that we are made for God as our end, and it is God himself who is our reward: and holiness hath a natural tendency to happiness, yea, is itself the beginning of it.

And nothing is more universally approved by the common notices of human nature than justice, or abhorred than injustice; the better any man is, the more he is of this temper; and Alexander Severus, Antonine, and such just princes are generally regarded with honour. And as all power is of God, and rulers are but his officers, Rom. xiii. 4, 5, 6. so their righteous government is but

the inferior part of God's own government, as the king governeth by his judges and justices : and therefore it is God that rewardeth and punisheth by them. Indeed by the same reason that men deny a reward to duty, the faultiness being pardoned through Christ, they might infer, that there is no punishment for sin : but God saith, Isa. iii. 10, 11. *Say to the righteous it shall be well with him, and say to the wicked it shall be ill with him. He will plentifully reward the proud doers,* Psa. xxxi. 23. *Yea, they reward evil to themselves,* Isa. iii. 9.

Holiness is God's image, and the product of the Holy Ghost ; and the devil and wicked men labour to dishonour it : and contrarily God honoureth it, and by his rewards will honour it openly before the world.

PHI. All this leadeth us to our own works, and sets up the law ; dishonoureth Christ and his righteousness, and is mere popery.

SOP. If this be God's word, and Christ's own law and doctrine, then you infer that Christ dishonoureth himself, and his own righteousness, and sets up man and human merits. But give me leave to tell you, that if you deny the reward of evangelical duty, as it is but our merit or worthiness of the free gift of Christ and life, according to the tenor of the covenant of grace, you will contradict so many of the most express texts of

scripture, as may give cause to suspect that really you believe not the scripture to be true, or that it is not *it*, but your own contradicting fancy, that is the measure of your belief.

PHI. “ *All our righteousnesses are as filthy rags;*” and what reward or praise then do they deserve? can that deserve praise, which deserveth hell?

SOP. Come on then, let conscience be a while unmuzzled: why do you so much praise those of your own church or opinion? why praise you so much the ministers and people that are of your way? why do you make a difference between them and such as are against you? why do you so aggravate the sin of those that vilify, deride and persecute you? why call you the saints, the precious ones on earth, God’s treasure and peculiar people? why were you so angry with a certain book, lately set forth, which vilifies men whom you and I have better thoughts of, if they deserve no more praise than the vilest? why were you so angry lately when you heard of one that reproached you, and so pleased with one that proclaimed your wisdom and goodness, and took your part? and if good actions deserve not praise from God himself, why doth he praise them so greatly in his word? why will he say before all the world, well done good and faithful servant? Doth not every thing and person deserve to be thought and



called just as it is? To say that God's works and holy image are not worthy, or morally fit, to be praised, is to deny God his praise and glory on earth: he that despiseth you, despiseth me, saith Christ, and consequently *him that sent me*, Luke x. 10.

PHR. What is righteous and holy is worthy that God should be praised for it, but not man.

SOP. We are not chief agents in good, but only the subordinate under God: yet are not second causes to be praised in their place and degree?

Believe and regard the word of God. Do none of these texts following speak of praise as due to men, in subordination to God, Deut. xxvi. 18, 19. *The Lord hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, and to make thee high above all nations, in praise, and in name, and in honour, and that thou mayest be an holy people to the Lord thy God.* Isa. lxii. 7. *Give him no rest till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.* Zeph. iii. 19, 20. *I will get them praise in every land, &c. I will make you a name and a praise among all people of the earth.* 1 Cor. iv. 5. *Then shall every man have praise of God.* 2 Cor. viii. 18. *The brother whose praise is in the gospel, &c.* Phil. iv. 8. *If there be any praise, think of these things.* 1 Sam. ii. 30. *Them that honour me, I will honour.* John xii. 26. *If any*

*man serve me, him will my father honour.* Do you believe and regard none of these passages.

PHI. I grant that God will praise the good, but not because we are worthy of it.

SOP. Have I not told you that he himself calleth his servants worthy, and will you contradict God's word? Dare you yet deny any thing to be worthy to be called what it indeed is? Is not a christian worthy to be called a christian? and a sober man to be called a sober man, and an honest man to be called an honest man? Must humility make us liars? Tell me, are you worthy yourself to be accounted and called an infidel, a heathen, an apostate, a heretick, a wicked ungodly man, that never repented, nor did good.

PHI. That were to lie or slander, to call one what he is not.

SOP. Are you not worthy then to be called contrarily, that is, what you are?

PHI. I ought so to be called, but not for my worthiness.

SOP. Must God and man account you such as you are not fit or worthy to be accounted? and will you go on to accuse and contradict God's word? Your fancy hath got some harsh conceit of the sense of the word *worthy*, and that cometh still into your mind, as if it meant a worthiness which supposed not that all that we have is of mercy and grace: when the scripture meaneth no such

worthiness, but such as is that of a loving, dutiful, thankful child.

PHI. Well, suppose that our actions and we are worthy of praise, yet they are worthy also of dispraise, that is, to be accounted defiled with sin, and deserving hell: and is not this a pitiful praise?

SOP. Did you ever hear us deny this? Why talk you of that which we are all agreed in? But you must remember it is not holiness, but the faulty imperfections of it, and the sin that is contrary to it, which deserveth hell. And the faults of sincere believers according to the law of grace, by which we are to be judged, deserve not hell, so as to be liable to it.

PHI. But if our faith and holiness deserve some praise, what is that to the deserving of salvation, or being worthy of heaven?

SOP. All these words your obstinacy hath put me to use, to convince you that faith and holiness are worthy of any thing, in any sense. But what it is that God will account the righteous worthy of, the scripture must determine; where I have shewed you before that the words are plain. *They are counted worthy of God, 1 Thes. ii. 12. And of his kingdom, 2 Thes. i. 5. Worthy to obtain that world, and the resurrection. Luke xx. 35. They shall walk with Christ in white, for they are worthy.*

P<sup>H</sup>I. Still I grant it in the scripture sense, but not in yours.

S<sup>O</sup>P. To end this tedious talk with one that seemeth loth to understand, say yea or nay to these two questions: 1 Do you allow of the use of the word *worthy*?

P<sup>H</sup>I. Yes: because it is in scripture.

S<sup>O</sup>P. 2. Do you deny it to be true in the sense I have opened, that is, that we have that worthiness which is nothing but a moral aptitude for the promised reward, merited for us by Christ, which is only a reward to thankful obedient children.

P<sup>H</sup>I. No: I cannot deny this sense to be sound.

S<sup>O</sup>P. Then you grant both name and thing: and are not you ashamed then to have so long traduced and reviled such as hold but that which you are forced to justify; and to make men believe that works are cried up, and Christ is injured; and their salvation hazarded by it, when yet you confess that all is true in word and sense?

P<sup>H</sup>I. But when the papists abuse such phrases to error, though the scripture use them, we must do it sparingly and with caution.

S<sup>O</sup>P. But is that a good reason for you to revile those that use them in the scripture sense? If you will forsake scripture words as oft as men misuse them, it will be in the power of hereticks

to drive you from all scripture phrase, by abusing all; and how can you more effectually promote popery, than by forsaking scripture language, and leaving it to their possession and use? Will not men think then, that the scripture sense is likelier to be with them than with you? were it not better for you to speak according to the word of God, and only detect and disclaim men's ill expositions of it.

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PHILODOXUS. BUT if I grant you, that our faith and holiness are worthy of everlasting reward, I shall never grant you that we are righteous thereby before God, or that they are any part of that righteousness by which we are justified; for that is only the righteousness of Christ.

SOP. I hope you are not willing to wrangle about words not understood. Do you think that the words *righteous*, *righteousness*, and *justification*, have but one sense in scripture?

PHI. No: you proved otherwise before.

SOP. Suppose you, or any believer, are charged with infidelity, how must you be justified against that charge?

**PHI.** By denying it, and by maintaining that I do believe.

**SOP.** Very good : then faith itself, as faith, doth so far justify you : and if you be charged as impenitent, how must you be justified against that charge ?

**PHI.** By denying it, and averring that I did repent.

**SOP.** So then, your repentance itself must so far justify you : and what if you be charged as an hypocrite, to have done all that you did in mere dissimulation, how must you be therein justified ?

**PHI.** By denying the charge, and appealing to God that I was sincere.

**SOP.** So then, your sincerity is so far your justifying righteousness : and what if you are charged with apostacy, that you fell from grace, must you not be justified by pleading your perseverance ?

**PHI.** These are none of them the justification which the scripture speaketh of ; which is only against true accusations, and not against false ones.

**SOP.** Say you so ? what if one be truly accused, that he never truly repented or believed ? or that he is unsanctified, and never sincerely obeyed Christ, &c. Is this man justifiable ?

**PHI.** No : I say not that all men are justifi-

fiable ; but whoever is justified in scripture sense, is justified only from a true accusation.

SOP. What is that true accusation ?

PHI. That he is a sinner, and deserveth damnation according to the law, and that he hath no righteousness of his own.

SOP. Must he not confess all this to be true, if it be true ? And is not confessing the guilt which he is accused of, contrary to justifying him ? Do you not see here what confusion you cast yourself into for want of noting the various senses of the word justification ?

PHI. But it is not scripture justification, unless it be perfect : and all that we do is imperfect. To be justified in some one thing, is not justification by faith.

SOP. No doubt but scripture mentioneth both particular justification as to some particular causes, and a justification from all things. And this latter is the great justification by faith, mentioned in scripture, that is, upon believing we are first made just by free given pardon and right to life, and true sanctification with it : and we are pronounced just, because so first made just. But this is not without our faith and repentance, which form our evangelical righteousness, being the performance of the condition on which the covenant of grace doth freely give us right to Christ,

pardon and life.

PHI. But your subordinate righteousness hath no hand in our justification.

SOP. This is but singing over the old song, by one that will not consider what is answered. Hath the performance of a condition, and the moral disposition of the receiver, no hand in the reception of a gift? What think you is the meaning of Christ's words, by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned? What meaneth St. James, that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only? Are men justified by that which hath no hand in their justification?

PHI. But the justification by faith is our universal justification; and that can be only by Christ's righteousness: and we are not to trust to a righteousness mixt of Christ's and ours; nor doth Christ's righteousness need to be patcht up with our rags.

SOP. No question but Christ's righteousness is perfect, and ours imperfect, and ours is no patch or supplement to Christ's: He is not made righteous by our righteousness, but we by his.

But that which is perfect in him, is not made perfectly ours; nor formally ours in itself, as distinct from its merited effects: it is not ours as it is Christ's. Christ who is our righteousness, is also made of God to us *wisdom* and *sanctifi-*



*cation*; and will you say therefore, that we are not to be wise or holy, by any wisdom or holiness of our own for fear of adding our patch.

You use to say that Christ's righteousness is ours as Adam's sin is ours; and some add, as Adam's righteousness would have been, had he persevered. But Adam's righteousness would have indeed made an infant initially just by propagation; that is, the innocent child of an innocent parent: though as soon as that infant had the use of reason and choice, he must also have a righteousness of his own, or perish: and this is no patch to Adam's righteousness.

And I must tell you, the word universal is too big to be properly given to any man's justification or righteousness, but Christ's: properly he only is universally justified or righteous, who hath no unrighteousness at all imputable to him, and is justifiable in all things: but the best believer, was a sinner originally, did oft sin actually, hath still sin in him, and for sin is judged and suffers chastisement and death. And the earth is still cursed for our sake: yea, which is worst of all, we are still under the penalty of some privations (alas, how great!) of God's Spirit and grace, and our communion with God. Such a one is not universally justified. But why do you waste time in vain cavilling against plain certain truth? What is there in name or thing asserted by us

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that you can deny or question ?

Do you deny that scripture commandeth us to believe that we *may* be justified ?

PHI. No.

SOP. Or that we are commanded not only thankfully to accept, but to obey Christ as our Lord, Redeemer and Saviour ?

PHI. No.

SOP. Dare you deny, that life or death eternal, dependeth on this as a condition or moral means ? and that we shall be judged according to it ?

PHI. No, I deny it not.

SOP. Is it not a law that thus commandeth us, and by which we must be judged ?

PHI. Yes, if it were no law, there would be no sin in the breach of it.

SOP. Is not a man so far just and justifiable by that law, as he keepeth it ?

PHI. Yes, I deny it not.

SOP. And doth not the same law virtually justify the performer now, whom it will justify as the rule of judgment at last ?

PHI. Yes, no doubt.

SOP. And is not the name of righteousness many score times given in scripture to our own actions done by grace, and measured by the new covenant ?

PHI. Yes, I cannot deny it.

SOP. Why then while you deny neither

*name* nor *thing*, what wrangle you about ?

And let me plainly tell you, that such men as you, by indiscreet overdoing, are not the least of satan's instruments to bring the gospel under scandal, and harden the world in infidelity ; while you would so describe the christian religion, as if this were the very sum of it, “ Believe that all the elect have fulfilled perfectly God's law by another, and that Christ did it as personating each of them ; and therefore no crime of their own is imputable to them, nor any kind or degree of goodness or righteousness, inherent in themselves, required of God as any means or condition of their present or future justification, or as having any hand therein.” As if God were become indifferent what we all are, so that Christ be but righteous for us : whereas it was Christ's grand design to restore lapsed man to God, which he doth not only by relative benefits, but by renewing them to his image in love and holy obedience.

PHI. Have you not lately and oft been told that holiness and obedience are necessary now ; but it is to other ends than to justify us ; as for gratitude, &c.

SOP. We easily grant it is for other ends than Christ's merits were, and not to justify us as they do ; nor in that causality. They are not to purchase for us a free gift of pardon and life, nor the Holy Ghost, &c. as Christ did. But again,

tell me hath not Christ a law that commandeth our obedience to those ends which you mention? And is not the keeping that law a thing that the same law will so far justify us for? And if the cause in judgment be, have you kept it or not, must you not in that be accordingly justified or condemned? Give over cavilling against plain necessary truth.

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PHILODOXUS. YOU bring in the doctrine of your own personal righteousness for justification, by feigning Christ to have made a new law; whereas the gospel is but a doctrine, history and promise, and not a law, and so no rule of righteousness and judgment; and this many protestants have asserted.

SOP. I confess I have met with a few such sayings among them; and some I think meant no more, but that Christ did only expound, and not add to the law of nature, called by them the moral law: and these I have excused for their unhappy kind of expression. But for the rest, who understand such language literally, they subvert christianity; and as the Arians denied Christ's Godhead, so do they his office and government, and are somewhat worse than the quakers, who

say, that the spirit within us is the law and rule of Christ; which is better than none: I pray you on this head, consider the following passages of scripture:

Gal. vi. 2. *Bear ye one anothers burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ,* Rom. iii. 27. *Boasting is excluded? By what law? Of works? Nay, but by the law of faith,* Mic. iv. 2. *For the law shall go out of Zion, &c.* So Isa. ii. 3. and viii. 16. 20, and xlii. 41. *The isles shall wait for his law.* 1 Cor. ix. 21. *We are under the law to Christ.* And all those texts where Christ is called a king, and his kingdom is mentioned, why should I needlessly recite them? And those that speak of his commanding and commandments, the same which we mean by a law. Matt. xxviii. 20. *Teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you: If ye do whatsoever I command you. These things I command you. Blessed are they that do his commandments, &c.* And those that not only call him Lord of all, but say that *all power in heaven and earth is given to him*; therefore legislative power, Matt. xxviii. 18. *and all judgment committed to him,* John v. 22. *The government is laid upon his shoulders, and of the increase of his government there shall be no end,* Isa. ix. 6, 7.

I may argue also from the definition; That

which hath the essential parts of a law is a law ; but Christ hath made that which hath the essential parts of a law : therefore he hath made a law.

The major is past dispute ; the minor I prove thus : that which hath a precept making duty, and a promise and threatenings, instituting the retribution by rewards and punishments, as an instrument of government, hath all the essentials of a law : but such is made by Christ : Ergo.

That Christ has prescribed us our duty in a variety of laws and precepts, we have just before observed, and is obvious to every one who reads the new testament. And do you that are so strict in condemning all human impositions as bold additions, believe that Christ himself hath made no laws for ordination, sacraments, preaching, worship, &c. and why fear you adding then ? can one add to nothing ? And what a lawless sort of persons are you, if you will neither have Christ nor man to make laws for you ?

As to promises and threats or penalties, of a far sorer punishment, Heb. 10. I am ashamed to stand to recite them to you. *He that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned,* is sure a law. *How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation ? See that ye reject not him that speaketh.* Heb. iv. & 10. *These mine enemies that would not that I should reign*

*over them, bring them hither and slay them before me.* Luke xix. 27. with abundance such.

And suffer me again to tell you, that to deny Christ's law, is to deny him to be a king, to deny his kingdom, and government, and your own subjection, and all duty and obedience to him; and indeed the very being of law and government in the world: for now there is no law of God in the world, but what is the Redeemer's law: even the law of nature is in his hand, and is the law of the Redeemer to lapsed nature. And all the world had a law of grace made to Adam in the first edition; and since the coming of Christ, the church hath it in the second edition. And now what part of christianity do you not destroy?

Choose you therefore, whether you will come off by confessing that you erred and differed from us but in a word not understood, or whether you will allow us to take you for downright hereticks? and bethink you whether those rash and self conceited divines that have reviled papists and Arminians for saying that Christ's gospel was a law, or that he made a new law, have done good service to the christian or the protestant cause? and have not rather done much to harden the papists into a more confident persuasion that protestants are hereticks?

PHILODOXUS. By feigning the covenant of grace to have conditions, you make it to be a covenant of works. Faith, I grant, is a work, but it is not placed in the covenant as a work required of us : but as a gift to be given to us freely.

SOP. Judge whether it be required of us, and that formally as a condition, by such texts as these : yea whether obedience be not required as a condition of our salvation, which is promised there-upon? Mark xvi. 16. *He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be damned.* Rom. x. 8, 9, 10, 13. *If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thy heart that God raised him from the dead thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.* Matt. vi. 14, 15. *For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if, &c.* Rev. xxii. 14. *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, &c.* See Isa. i. 16, 17, 18. & Iv. 6, 7. Luke xiii. 3, 5. 1 John i. 9. Acts iii. 19. Heb. v. 9. &c.



PHI. God promiseth a reward to our actions, not as ours, but as his own gifts.

SOP. Enough is said of rewards before : we shall not by such talk as this believe either that God rewardeth himself, or that he rewardeth not us. But we easily grant that he rewardeth us for nothing which cometh not from his bounty : for no creature can have any other good.

PHI. At least they are no conditions of the covenant.

SOP. Do you think that they are any proper means of our justification and salvation as their end, or not ?

PHI. Yes: I dare not say, that they are no means at all ; faith and repentance are means of our pardon, and holiness and perseverance of our glorification.

SOP. What sort of means do you take them to be ?

PHI. They are such gifts of God as in order must go before salvation.

SOP. Going before, signifieth only antecedency, and not any means.

PHI. One gift maketh us fit for a thankful improvement of another.

SOP. This speaketh them only to be a means to our thankful improvement, and not to our right to the things to be improved.

PHI. I do not think that they are a means of our right and title.

SOP. Rev. xxii. 14. *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, &c.*

PHI. It may be translated "that wash their garments," and "that they may have power upon," as Dr. Hammond noteth.

SOP. The Alexandrian copy which giveth him this occasion, is singular, and not to be set against all the rest, though the vulgar latin go the same way. Beza, who yet thinks that a transposition of two verses hath obscured these texts; this book being negligently used, because many for a time took it not for an apostolical writing, or canonical; yet saith, that it is *contra omnium Græcorum codicum fidem*, that the vulgar goeth. But all's one in sense; for "to wash their garments" is "to be sanctified or purified from sin," and not only from guilt of punishment: and ἐξουσία usually signifieth such a power as we call authority or right. But what maketh you deny conditions on man's part?

PHI. Because, 1. It is supposed that a condition is profitable to him that requireth it. 2. It is some cause of the benefit. 3. It is to be done by the performers own strength: whereas God giving us faith, that can be no condition on our part which is first a gift from him that requir-

eth it: for to give it first, maketh it no condition to be performed by us.

SOP. Here we see, what it is to quarrel about ambiguous words.

Civilians define a condition to be *Lex addita negotio, quæ donec præstetur eventum suspendit*. As it is required is only *Modus promissionis, donationis vel contractus*: as performed, it is only a removal of an impediment, and disposition of the receiver. So that as the non-performance is but the suspension of a causation, so the performance of a condition as such is no cause efficient. And though it be an act of our own, it is no way necessary that it be done without the commander's help or gift: for he that giveth us to believe, doth give it by this means, even by commanding it, and making it a condition of his further benefits, that so he may induce us as rational free agents to perform it *ex intuitu mercedis*, or by the motive of the end or benefit. For he causeth it by suitable means. And no doubt, but faith, and the rest, are free acts of ours, though caused by God's grace.

And it is accidental to a condition, that it be any way commodious to the imposer. What profit is it to a father that his child put off his hat and say, I thank you? and yet he may make that a condition of his gift. What profit is it to a free physician, that the patient observe his order in

taking his medicines? and yet he may give them on that condition.

But yet I will add, that as usually men make that the condition of a gift or contract, which the person obliged is backward to perform, and that which is somewhat either for the donor or contractor's interest, or the ends of his contract: so God who taketh his pleasure in his children's good, to be as his interest, and the end of his gifts, and knoweth how backward we are to our duty, doth on these accounts impose on us conditions, his pleasure and glory being instead of his commodity.

But if, *If*, be a conditional particle, and God's suspending by the tenor of his donation, our right to justification upon our free believing, and our right to salvation upon our free obedience, prove conditionality, as it doth all that we mean; then you see that the new covenant hath conditions.

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PHILODOXUS. WHAT do you but subvert the gospel, when you put faith instead of Christ or of his righteousness? when the scripture saith that we are justified by Christ's righteousness imputed to us, you say it is by faith imputed.

SOP. Do you think any sober christians here really differ? or is it about the name or meaning? As to the name, is it not often said that faith is and shall be imputed for righteousness? Rom. iv. 22, 23, 24. James ii. 23.

PHI. Yes; I must grant the words, but not your meaning.

SOP. Where doth the scripture say, that Christ's righteousness is imputed to us? remember that it is only the name that I ask you of.

PHI. It saith that righteousness is imputed: and what righteousness can it be but Christ's?

SOP. I tell you still, it is only the phrase or words that we are first trying. Are these the same words "righteousness is imputed" and "Christ's righteousness is imputed?" if not, where are these latter words in scripture?

PHI. Grant that the words are not, and your words are.

SOP. Then the question is, whether scripture phrase or man's invented phrase, be the better and safer in a controvertible case? and next, whether you should deny or quarrel at the scripture saying, that "faith is imputed to us for righteousness," and not rather confute our misexpounding it, if we do so?

PHI. Well, let us examine the sense

then : what righteousness is it but Christ's that is imputed to us ?

SOP. It is none but what we have from Christ : but the phrase of imputing supposeth it ours : and the meaning is no more, but that " we are reputed righteous : " and the causes are not included in the phrase of " imputing righteousness to us , " but in the words before and after. As imputing sin to us, is but to repute, reckon or judge us sinners, or by sin liable to punishment ; it is the same here. So that it is supposed, 1. That righteousness, *i. e.* the relation of being righteous, is the thing imputed : 2. Christ's righteousness is the meritorious cause : 3. The gospel donation is the instrumental cause : 4. Our faith in Christ is the condition, and as such, the subordinate matter necessary on our parts. And that faith is imputed for righteousness, plainly meaneth but this, that Christ having merited and satisfied for us, all that is now required on our part to denominate, or constitute us righteous, is to be true believers in him, or true christians.

And I further ask you, do you thus paraphrase the words, faith, that is Christ's righteousness, is imputed to us for righteousness ?

PHI. Yes, I do so : because the act is put for the object.

SOP. Were it so said but once, you had some colour for this : but when it is never said " Christ's

righteousness is imputed to us” and so oft said “ Faith is imputed for righteousness,” how shall ever the scripture be understood at this rate, if still by *faith* it mean not *faith* at all, but Christ’s righteousness? and why must not all other places that mention *faith* be so understood also? But read the texts, and set all together, and see what sense thus will be made of it.

Rom. iv. 3. *What saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it (that is not believing, but Christ’s righteousness,) was imputed to him for righteousness.* Is this a sober and modest paraphrase, or a shameless violence? Doth not it refer to *believing God* before mentioned?—Ver. 4. 5. *To him that worketh is the reward not reckoned (or imputed) of grace, but of debt: but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith, (that is, not his faith, but Christ’s righteousness) is counted for righteousness.* Is this a modest exposition? So ver. 22. *And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness: that is, not his faith; but by it is only meant Christ’s righteousness, though it was faith that was over and over mentioned as the antecedent.*

I will not for shame and weariness thus go over such texts: but I must be so faithful as to say, that if good men, and wise men, and men that cry down the papists and others for adding to

God's word, and corrupting it, and calling it a nose of wax, and introducing new articles of faith, will yet own such expositions as these, and accuse those that own them not, they are as great instances as most I remember, except the defenders of transubstantiation, how far education, or custom, or human dependance, or faction, partiality, and prejudice, may blind the reason of professed christians and godly men.

But it is most easy to discern, that the plain sense of such passages is, that "Christ being presupposed the meriter of our justification and salvation, which he hath given the world conditionally by a law of grace, by which now he ruleth and judgeth us, all that this covenant, gift or law requireth on our part to make us righteous, and entitle us to the Spirit, and everlasting life, is, that as penitent believers we accept Christ and life according to the nature, ends and uses of the gift; and this also by his grace."

Hold close, Eulabes, to this plain doctrine, which most of the lower sort of christians know, who have not fallen into perverters hands, and you will have more solid, practical, and peaceable truth about this point, than either Dr. Thomas Tullie, or Maccovius, or Mr. Crandon, or Dr. Crisp, or the marrow of modern divinity, or Paul Hobson, or Mr. Saltmarsh, or any such writers teach, who being themselves entangled



and confounded by incongruous notions of man's invention, they are likelier to entangle and confound you, than to shew you the best method and grounds for the peace of an understanding dying man.

Christ's righteousness is imputed or reckoned to be as it is, the total sole meritorious cause of all that blessedness and glory given us in and by the conditional law or covenant, and of the grace necessary for performance of the condition ; and it needeth nothing at all of ours to make it perfect to this use ; nor hath our faith any such supplemental office. But this condition of our part in Christ, and of our right to his covenant gifts, must be performed : and the sentence of absolution or condemnation, life or death, must be passed on us accordingly ; it being not Christ, but we by this very law, that are to be justified or condemned.

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PHILODOXUS. THE fear of losing our justification, which you teach men, is most injurious to God's free grace and immutability, and a rack for conscience to destroy mens peace.

SOP. What I hold upon this subject, you will learn from the following particulars :

Too many are confident that they are justified, who ought not only to fear that they are not but to know it. Too many that are justified, fall into such decays of grace, as that it becometh thereupon their duty to fear lest their hearts should deceive them, and they prove unjustified. The uncertainty becoming unavoidable, some fear in an uncertain person is a duty, without which he would shew a contempt of God and his salvation.

A certainty beyond fear, supposeth a very high proportionable degree of all other graces; for the new creature in the chief parts useth to increase or decrease together: but few have such high degrees of grace. Such an apprehension of the dreadfulness of God's judgment, as is necessary to vigilancy and labour for prevention, is all men's duty, Luke xii. 4, 5. Heb. xii. 28, 29. And on this consideration, if we *will serve God acceptably, it must be with reverence and godly fear.* And we must keep under our bodies with Paul, and bring them into subjection, lest after all we should be castaways.

Needful preventing fear doth secure and further our comforts, by removing the sin and danger that would hinder them: but all fear which includeth unbelief, or distrust of Christ, is sinful, and to be resisted with all our care; and the more distrust, the greater is the sin. All fear that

driveth from Christ, and so from faith, and hope, and love, and true consolation, we utterly condemn as injurious to God and man.

We teach all christians to contend with utmost diligence, to get up to the highest trust, love, joy, thanksgiving and praise, as the proper evangelical excellency nearest heaven: and to get as fast as they can above that fear which hath torment, which is cast out as love groweth perfect: and to pray and seek for the spirit of adoption, of power, and love, and a sound mind, instead of the spirit of fear and bondage: and not to place too much of their religion in that very fear which in its season is a duty, much less in hurtful sinful fear: but always and in all things to rejoice in the Lord, with love and gratitude, and confidently to cast all their cares on him.

Yet we know that presumption, self-deceit and pride, are so common in the world, that fear is very needful to most, and there is cause with Paul to exhort many proud professors, that they be not high minded, but fear, even lest God should cut them off as he did the Jews; Heb. iv. 1. And Christ twice over reciteth his urgent exhortatory words, Luke xii. 4, 5. *I will tell you whom you shall fear—fear him who, when he hath killed, hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you fear him: Is not this authority full, and*

these words plain and very earnest, even to his friends?

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PHILODOXUS. My next charge against you is, that you call men to duties, and to mortification, before they believe and are regenerate.

SOP. In answer to this let me tell you, you are a man of pernicious principles, and downright heretical, if you would have us call no unregenerate persons to any duty whatsoever. Answer me these questions: Would you not have your wife, children and servants taught, that it is their duty to love, honour and obey you? and your neighbours to deal justly with you? and the rulers to protect you, and the judges to do you justice?

PHI. I speak only of religious and not civil duties.

SOP. You are indifferent it seemeth as to the interest of God's honour and men's salvation, provided your own interest be secured. Duty to you, must be preached, but not to God. But would not you have your children and domesticks taught to honour and serve you, in obedience to the Lord? and subjects to submit themselves to their rulers as to the ministers of God? Should not all be done to the glory of God?

PHI. Yes, it should be; but the wicked cannot do it: therefore they must be first made godly, and the heart renewed, that the life may be amended.

SOP. We are as much for heart-work, and for beginning there, as you are: we know that God accepteth not the hypocrite, and that no outward actions are any further good or acceptable than as they proceed from an heart renewed by divine grace. But tell me, are we to call men to no duty at all, in order to the obtaining a new heart? Should we not persuade them to hear God's word?

PHI. Yes: how shall they believe unless they hear?

SOP. Must we not call them from the sinful diversions, yea, from their lawful employments, that they may hear in season? and those that say, they cannot come because of their oxen, farms and business, to change their mind.

PHI. Yes, no doubt of it: Zaccheus must be in Christ's way.

SOP. Must we not persuade them to take heed how and what they hear? and to set their hearts to all God's words, and to see that they despise not him that speaketh? and to consider of the truth and weight of all, and to search the scripture to see whether these things be so?

PHI. I deny none of this.

SOP. May we not persuade them to come and talk and reason the case with friends or ministers, that we may convince them ?

PHI. Yes no doubt, as well as to hear in public.

SOP. And may we not persuade men to believe that there is a God, and that the scripture is his word, and that Christ is the Messias ?

PHI. Yes ; the devils believe all this.

SOP. And may we not exhort them to repent, and turn to God, and to believe in Christ, and give up themselves to him ?

PHI. Yes, you may exhort them : but they cannot do it of themselves.

SOP. Must we exhort them to nothing but what they can do of themselves ? Is not exhortation God's means to bring them to repentance and faith in Christ ?

PHI. Yes ; I deny none of this ; but that which you abuse men by, is bidding the ungodly pray, when the prayers of the wicked are abominable to God ; and in that you do not first call them to believe and come to Christ, before they do any other duty.

SOP. You granted me before that hearing and searching the scripture, and other things just mentioned, are to be done before believing in Christ, by those who are yet unbelievers. He that believeth there is a God, must behave him-

self accordingly in obeying God. Men who believe in Christ but by assent, are bound to do somewhat in order to a fuller justifying belief. And are you so much against the very law of nature, worse than the seamen that bid Jonas call upon his God ; worse than the Ninivites, and than almost all mankind, that you would have no men pray but godly men ? Did not Peter bid Simon Magus repent and pray, and doth not God command the wicked, Isa. lv. to *Seek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near ?* Should no graceless man ask wisdom of God ? *who giveth liberally to all men, and upbraideth not,* James i. and giveth his Spirit to them that ask him ? Must they not pray for grace, faith and repentance, that want them ? But yet let me remind you, that we use not to exhort men to draw nigh to God with the lips alone ; nor to pray without desire : for praying is but desiring, and presenting that desire to God.

PHI. But without faith it is impossible to please God, or do any thing which is not abominable to him.

SOP. But it is not impossible for one to have a common and temporary faith, and another a saving. And one *that believeth that God is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him,* and this not savingly, may yet less displease God, and be less abominable than he was before without

it: and also may do something that tendeth as a means, to that faith by which he may please him.

A total unbeliever, and a wicked man as wicked, whose prayers are joined with wicked principles and ends, utterly displeaseth God, and his prayers and all such actions are abominable.

A convinced wicked man, that doth somewhat from self-love for his own salvation, and especially one that is near the kingdom of God, in the use of common grace, so far pleaseth God: and Christ is said to love such a man, Mark x. 21. But only the true penitent believer so pleaseth him as to be an adopted heir of life.

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SOPHRON. AND now, Eulabes, what think you of the cavils that have puzzled and troubled you? Have you heard any thing that should change your mind?

EULABES. I have heard that from you that confirmeth and satisfieth me: but it grieveth my very soul, to think what temptations and perplexing trials poor ignorant people are assaulted by, and how hard a thing it must needs be for such to escape great distraction; to think in how sad a condition the church of God is, that besides



what they suffer from men of violence, and the flatterers of the world, are thus troubled and ensnared by men of high profession of religion, and even drawn to corrupt the word of God, and almost to preach *another gospel*; and that ever men of such professions should be instruments of so much evil: Woe to the world because of offences, and woe to them by whom they come!

SOP. Alas! it is no new thing: do you not remember that Paul had such and worse to deal with? Read Gal. i. and iii. and iv. Read Rev. ii. and iii. Jude, and 2 Pet. ii. and James ii. and iii. and Acts xv. &c. and you will see, that even those purest times when they had apostolical gifts and authority to restrain and settle them, were yet thus tried and perplexed by men of high pretensions, so that Paul wisheth that they were cut off that troubled them; and Christ proclaimeth his hatred of the doctrine of the Nicolaitans; and Paul tells the Corinthians, that heresies must be among them, that those which are approved may be manifested; and the Ephesians, Acts xx. 30. *That of their ownelves should men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw disciples after them.* And ever since in all ages the church hath been as Christ on the cross, between two thieves,

viz. the tyrannical, and the superstitious and heretical sort of professing christians. But hold fast plain primitive simplicity, and serious practice of a sober, righteous, godly, and peaceable life, and you will get safe through all such snares.

## DIALOGUE II.

*Antaxius and Sophron.*

ANTAXIUS. **I** Am greatly scandalized by a sermon that you lately preached in London, in which you said, as many good people assure me, that the difference between the protestants and the papists was little more than in mere words; the city ringeth of it, and it is a common scandal and offence.

SOPHRON. Seeing you heard it not, you are unfit to receive satisfaction about it, save only by telling you the report is false, and that which I said of some particular controversies only, they feign to be spoken of all, or most; but of this when you bring one that heard it, I will give you a further account.

ANT. However I perceive by your words and writings, that you extenuate our difference about man's merits; and what is there that we more differ from the papists about, than merits? and from the Arminians, than their placing our righteousness in our own believing and repenting? Is there any thing that more evacuateth the righteousness of Christ, destroyeth the ho-

nour of free grace, and justly entitleth them to the name of antichristian?

SOP. Before I further discourse with you, I must desire you not to forget, that I here advance not a word to justify or excuse the papists in general, or any one of them in particular, for any unsound word about this subject, nor to abate your dislike of any of their errors: and before we proceed, I desire your promise that you will hear and speak with as little partiality as you can; for to lay by all, I cannot expect; and that you will be true to what evidence of truth shall appear to you.

ANT. Do you think that I love not truth and sobriety? Why do you so suspect me?

SOP. Alas how strange are our hearts oft to themselves! and how much of our own ignorance, temerity, passion and unjust partiality is there, in many a cause which we father upon God, and his truth and grace! but in order to our better understanding, I ask your answer to these questions: Had you rather it did truly appear to you, that the papists and Arminians do less differ from us, than most conceive, or not?

ANT. I had rather they did differ less; and if it be so, I had rather know it than not; but I would not hear that it is so, when it is not.

SOP. Take heed that your heart deceive you not, and that you be not averse to know the

truth, lest it should cross your own or other mens former censures.

If it prove true, that the difference is less than most take it to be, is he that falsly aggravateth it to the procuring of unjust odium, or he that truly openeth and extenuateth it, the most to be commended and approved ?

ANT. If you have the truth on your side, no doubt but you do well, because love and peace are on your side, and our fault is great that quarrel with you.

SOP. Do you think it is justice in any papists, to charge the crude unsound expressions of particular writers, on the protestant party as their doctrine ; or for us to do the same by them ?

ANT. No.

SOP. Do you think that the bare name of *merit*, is cause enough to accuse any of false doctrine, who mean by it nothing that is unsound ; or that the name is reason enough for sharp accusations of such men ?

ANT. I am willing to distinguish the controversy *de nomine* from that *de re*, and not to make a greater matter of a name than there is cause : but yet ill names do tend to introduce ill doctrines.

SOP. Do you hold that well-doing hath any reward from God ?

ANT. It is not vain ; it hath that blessing freely given which is improperly called a reward.

SOP. It is figuratively called wages ; and this is the commonest scripture title ; and cannot you bear with God's word ? But it is not improperly called *præmium* a reward, that is, a benefit given to one for well doing. Indeed if with the new atheistical philosophers, you take God but for a *physical motor*, and his government and laws to be nothing but motion, then you may say the same of his rewards and punishments.

ANT. Well, you know that protestants deny not reward.

SOP. Is not reward formally related to some well-doing, as the moral aptitude of the receiver.

ANT. Yes, it is such a relation.

SOP. Are not they then of your judgment as to the matter, who hold merit in no other sense than as it is rewardable well-doing, or a moral aptitude for reward ?

ANT. I deny not, that with such I differ but in the name.

SOP. Do not you know that it is the common usage of the word, in civil and ecclesiastical writers, to take *meritum* and *præmium* so far for relatives, as that *omne præmium est meriti præmium* ? It is true that *meritum* is sometimes taken less

properly for any *dueness*; as a man is said to merit his father's legacy, that is, hath right to it. Sometimes it is taken for any moral congruity; sometimes for desert of punishment; and sometimes for a fault itself; as Calvin noteth on the word: but still every reward is formally related to merit or rewardableness.

ANT. Yet not only our late lectures against popery, but many protestants say, that it is not merit, unless it be equal in value to the reward; and therefore their arguments against merit are, 1. That the reward is merely of mercy and grace: consequently not of merit. 2. That our works are imperfect. 3. That we need pardon. 4. That our works are not equal in goodness and value to eternal life. 5. That we cannot profit God. Lastly, that grace and debt are opposite. So that the question is but of such a merit as by equal worth maketh the reward due in point of justice.

SOP. All these reasons sufficiently confute merit in point of commutative justice: but they go upon a mere mistake, as if this were the state of the controversy between us and the Roman church, or that they took merit in any such sense; unless it be some rare ignorant fellow, such as Romæus seemeth by some words, and some few others. Therefore before we proceed further, let me briefly and plainly open the case. God standeth related to

man, 1. As his *owner* : 2. As his *rector* by laws : 3. As his *benefactor*.

To merit of a proprietor or owner, must be by giving him somewhat to his gain or pleasure, for which he is bound in commutative justice to requite us : To merit of a ruler is to do that which he is bound to reward in distributive justice, in order to perform his rewarding promises, or at least for the ends of government : To merit of a mere benefactor is no more than not to be incapable of his gift, which is improperly called merit.

All our controversy is about the second : God as governor ruled man at first by the law of innocency ; afterwards by the law of grace ; and *that* as delivered to Adam and Noah, or to the Jews with the addition of the mosaical law of works, or as delivered in the gospel by Christ and his apostles. To dream of meriting from God as a proprietor in point of commutative justice is next to madness : and is not the doctrine of the church of Rome that I know of.

To assert our meriting of God as rector by the law of innocency is dotage. And I know none that hold that we do so by ourselves, (though some hold that we do by Christ.) Nor do any but Jews, assert merit according to the jewish law of works. But they that hold Christ hath merited and freely given pardon and right to life to



all mankind, on condition of a penitent believing acceptance of the free gift, and this by a law of grace, which we must now be ruled and judged by, do hold that this law hath its rewards, and man's acts accordingly their worth or merit.

This merit in point of distributive justice, is to be conceived of and defined according to the dispensation which it respecteth, which is God's paternal government of freely redeemed sinners, by a law of grace freely pardoning and saving them if they will believe and accept the gift. So that it is only meriting under a law made by a governing owner and benefactor, for the sapiential orderly disposal of a free gift. As a father will teach a child obedience by telling him that he will give him gold, if he will thankfully accept it.

It is not true therefore that it is merely a free gift: for though it is such with respect to the value and *quoad rem*, yet that gift is a reward in regard of the order of conveyance, and tenor of the donation, and the moral capacity of the receiver. That we cannot perform the condition, without divine grace, is nothing against the tenor of the donation, nor the relation of a reward.

And though here be nothing of commutative justice, yet there is that which justifieth the name of wages used analogically in the scriptures: be-

cause love in a father maketh a child's interest to be partly his own; and the pleasure of his will is that to God, who is love itself and delighteth in his childrens good, which profit is to an human proprietor. And now I will proceed with my questions :

Do you think that papists or Arminians believe that either man, or angel, or even Christ can merit of God by profiting him, in commutative justice? Or that it is possible for any creature to have any good which is not the free gift of God?

ANT. I have hitherto thought that they so judge: why else talk they of merit of *congruity* and *condignity*, and that say some *ex dignitate*, yea, and *ex proportione operum*?

SOP. It seemeth you are not aware how much you hold of all this yourself. Let us try.

By merit, they must be understood to mean a subordinate merit, which supposeth the benefit, 1. To be God's gift, 2. Merited by Christ.

ANT. How prove you that?

SOP. From the express words of the Trent council de Justif. Can. 8. " We are said to be  
 " justified *gratis*, because nothing that goeth be-  
 " fore justification, whether it be faith or works,  
 " doth merit the grace itself of justification: for if

“ it be grace, it is no more of works ; else grace  
“ is not grace.

“ Can. 16. Though so much be given in  
“ scripture to good works, that Christ promiseth  
“ him that giveth but a cup of cold water to one  
“ of the least, that he shall not lose his reward :  
“ yet, far be it from a christian to trust or glory  
“ in himself, and not in the Lord, whose good-  
“ ness is so great to all men, that he wills  
“ those things to be their merits which are his  
“ gifts.”

And Anath. C. 26. they thus open their  
doctrine of merit : “ If any say, that the righte-  
“ ous ought not to expect eternal retribution from  
“ God, by his mercy and Christ’s merits, for  
“ the good works done in God, if by well-doing  
“ and keeping God’s commandments, they perse-  
“ vere to the end, let him be anathema.

“ C. 31, 32. If any say, that a justified  
“ man’s good works are so God’s gifts, that they  
“ be not also the justified man’s merits ; or that  
“ the justified do not truly merit increase of grace  
“ and life eternal, by the good works which are  
“ done by God’s grace and Christ’s merit, of  
“ whom he is a living member, &c. Anath. sit.

“ C. 16. To them therefore, that do well  
“ to the end, and hope in God, life eternal is to  
“ be proposed, both as grace mercifully promis-  
“ ed to the sons of God through Jesus Christ, and

“ as a reward faithfully to be given by God’s  
“ own promise to their works and merits.”

ANT. Yes, this ridiculous doctrine of our meriting by God’s grace and Christ’s merits, I have often read and heard of in them.

SOP. It is somewhat bold to deride that which scripture, reason, and all the ancient churches do accord in. That Christ merited that we should subordinately merit, that is, be rewardable, as before explained, hath no less consent. And *contra rationem nemo sobrius : contra scripturam nemo christianus : contra ecclesiam nemo catholicus.*

ANT. But if the council of Trent deny that justification is at all merited, what is meant by the papists, merit of congruity ?

SOP. Many of them at least, mean much the same by it which Mr. Rogers, Bolton, Hooker and others, call preparation for Christ or for conversion ; and so the council of Trent considers it : which maketh a man a more congruous receiver of grace than the unprepared, but doth not prove God obliged to give it him as a reward. And do not you hold all this yourself ?

ANT. But what is their *merit of condignity* then ? Is not that abominable ?

SOP. You know that the words *worthy* and *worthiness* are used in the scripture. Bear therefore with scripture words. And all papists

mean not the same thing, or use not the same expressions at least: some say, that it is from God's promise that the merit and dueness result; or from God's decree and free acceptance.

ANT. I am sure your own friends say, that these are few and too modest, and indeed half hereticks for their pains.

SOP. I love not to persuade the world that men mean worse than they speak. What you intend by too modest, I know not; but it is not true either that they are few, or taken by their church for half hereticks. And truth is well served by nothing but truth.

ANT. But what mean they that say it is *ex dignitate*, if not as profiting God?

SOP. I tell you they almost all conclude against merit in respect to commutative justice; and who is so mad as to think that we profit God? you may also ask what the scripture meaneth by worthiness; and how else will you translate ἀξία but worthy or deserving? And what is ἀξία but merit?

ANT. But some of them say plainly that it is of debt?

SOP. Yes: they oft say with Augustine, that God by his promise hath made himself as a debtor.

ANT. But some say that merit of condignity is *ex proportione operum* to the reward.

SOP. It is impossible to know what every man meaneth, and impossible to make all men speak congruously: but as far as I can discern, most of them that so speak, mean, that the infinitely wise God doth all things in order and harmony; and as he suiteth natural causes and effects, so he doth moral; and that he who loveth God much, shall be proportionably happy.

And here I offer you an argument for reward in this sense of proportion, which all the world cannot answer. If the reward be essential to, or necessarily inseparable from true love and obedience, then true love and obedience have certainly a reward, but the former is certain: For 1. To love God is the soul's health, pleasure and felicity itself, including the knowledge of him; and perfect knowledge and love is perfect happiness. 2. To obey God is to do that which pleaseth him: and to please God is man's ultimate end and reward. 3. It is impossible but that God, by his perfection, should love and be pleased with every thing that is good, according to the proportion of its goodness; and therefore with the love and obedience of his children. So that all those arguments of protestants which well prove holiness

to be happiness itself, prove the reward to be essential or inseparable.

ANT. But some say that they are so impudent as to assert, that from the intrinsic worth of the work, setting aside the consideration of the promise, it is meritorious.

SOP. Their commonest opinion is, that the natural aptitude of holiness and obedience, and the promise of God set together, make them rewardable or meritorious as they call it: which is most certain. God promiseth not his blessings and happiness to men for things evil, or worthless and indifferent: but some among their doctors say, that were there no promise, holiness would be rewardable; that is, God's perfection inferreth that he is pleased with it: and as this doth but speak the suitableness of God's image to be the object of his love, and of obedience to be the pleasing of his will; so it seemeth to me only to mean that were there no positive supernatural promise, yet the very law of nature, which is God's first law, containeth such a signification of his will, that he will love and bless those that love and obey him, as is indeed a kind of natural promise.

And it is to be noted, that all the heathen world who know not the written promise, do

agree in this as a natural verity, that God loveth and is pleased with virtue and obedience, though they may mistake their true nature, and that it shall go well with those who are so qualified. If we should forget the papists, and preach to religious people among us, that there is no goodness in the divine image, and in holy love and obedience, for which God would love or be pleased with such as have them, (supposing redemption and the merits of Christ,) any more than with the wicked, if it were not that he hath promised, as if he had been surprised into a promise, not suited to the nature of the thing; this would be abhorred by the same persons, who in other words, as it seemeth to be against popery, will applaud it.

But in all this you must remember, that it is presupposed that man's soul is made immortal by God as creator; and that he might annihilate the most holy creature if he pleased; but he hath declared that he will not, partly by the nature of the soul itself, and partly by his natural and positive revelations; so that it is presupposed that God will continue us in being, and then holiness will be a proportionable happiness.

ANT. But I pray you give me further proof that the papists mean so well as you represent: cite me the authors.

SOP. You must take nothing for their doc-



trine but what is in their councils : and you must charge no error on them but what you can prove : for the accuser is the prover. And I before cited to you the words of the Trent council.

But I justify not all that they there say : and one passage, as it soundeth, I greatly abhor ; which is, that “ a just man doth not venially sin, much less deserve hell in every good work,” Can. 11. de justif. whereas I doubt not but the very culpable defect of love to God, and other holy qualifications, defileth our best works with sin : and every sin deserveth some degree of punishment in hell according to the law of innocency : but if they mean, that good works, as such, are not sin, or that our infirmities are not such to which the law of grace threateneth hell, and will condemn us ; we are then of their mind, but we much dislike their words : for were there not an antecedent desert of hell, though not by an unremediable guilt, there would be no need of pardon. But to speak freely, the council doctors seem not well studied in the doctrine of the covenants, even Suarez de Legibus, one of the best, is herein short, and they speak confusedly of these matters : but they seem mostly to take notice only of the law of grace, and because that accepteth sincerity, and condemneth none for mere infirmities, therefore they thence measure both *fault* and *guilt*, which they should not do : for I find that

they still presuppose redemption in the present case.

But to proceed to their doctors : Tho. Waldensis and some others, deny all merit strictly so called, de sacram. tit. 1. Eckius, Marsilius and Bellarmine saith S. Clara, deny all merit of congruity. Greg. Arim. saith that there is no merit of blessedness by condignity. Bradwardine laboureth to prove that the increase of grace and glory is not merited *de condigno*, but *de congruo* ; and that all catholicks so hold. Bonaventure saith, Pelagius erred, 1. In holding that the first grace was merited ; 2. That by the strength of free-will we can dispose or prepare ourselves for grace. S. Clara saith, *estimo esse omnium scholasticorum, non dari ex parte peccatoris ullam causam meritoriam, dispositionem, aut conditionem ad primam gratiam*. For which he citeth August. P. Innoc. 1. ad Concil. Carth. Concil. Arausic. 2. can. 3, 4, 5. Concil. Trident. Sess. 6. c. 5. concluding, *Et sine dubio hoc est de fide apud omnes Catholicos doctores, nec ullus unquam oppositum tenuit. Et Bradward, optimus divinæ gratiæ propugnator, dicit expressè—esse pelagianismum, licet intelligeretur solùm de merito de congruo*.

Vega's judgment is commonly known. I may conclude then with S. Clara, that Cassander spake not unreasonably when he said, *Quo sensu*

*hoc vocabulo meriti & merendi usi sunt patres & catholici, obscurum non est, nempe ut per illud gratiæ dei ex qua merita omnia oriuntur, nihil detrahatur, Quare nil est cur aut ecclesiastici à loquendi forma & sententia in ecclesia jam olim usitata discedani, aut protestantes eam tam odiosè repudient aut condemnet.*

ANT. Do you then approve the word merit?

SOP. I like the scripture word *ἀξίον*. And they that translate it worthy, and account condignity the highest notion of merit, seem to allow that it may be translated *meriting*. I would fain find a word to serve instead of merit, answering reward, and I cannot: what word can you find? Premiability and rewardableness are long and unhandsome, and I remember no other, without using many words. Yet I wish it disused, to avoid abuse and offence.

But to go on with my account of the papists. I will mention Aquinas, because you know who numbereth him with the grosser sort. He asserteth that man meriteth not at all of God according to absolute or simple justice: and that our voluntary obedience is our merit, not as profiting God, but as manifesting his glory, and pleasing his will: and he concludes, that without grace even man in innocency could not merit life eternal. When therefore he speaks for merit of condig-

nity, it is such a merit as aforesaid that he meaneth. But the first grace he saith none meriteth.

But I desire you for the understanding of Aquinas, and such others, to take notice, that the foundation of many confused speeches of theirs, is their confused notions of God's laws or covenants. For Aquinas, like the quakers, and others amongst ourselves, holds, that the new law of grace is not written but in the heart, and so that *lex scripta* is called a law secondarily as a means to this. But this is gross abuse of an equivocal word: for sanctity of heart is called a law only in a tropical sense.

But from this notion, that the old law was a writing, and the new law was the spirit in us, no wonder if Aquinas gathered, that the word justify chiefly signified to make us good and holy persons; and that our holiness being our real appetite for our glorifying and pleasing God, and so for our happiness therein, was to be called our merit: meaning thereby but that *fitness* for reward, which scripture calleth worthiness, and which all religious preachers and people among us zealously defend in other words, where the papists are forgotten.

ANT. It can never enter into my thoughts that so many godly learned protestants would

make odious the papists, if some of them at least meant no worse.

SOP. Know you not that so judicious a man as George Major was made the head of hereticks by Gallus, Amsdorfius, &c. for but saying, *bona opera sunt necessaria ad salutem*: read your *Schlüsselburgius* of his heresy, and judge as you see cause.

ANT. But are many other schoolmen of Aquinas's opinion? We commonly suppose them to give more to merit.

SOP. There are many school doctors so strict herein, that they will not grant that there is any such thing properly as legal or governing justice in God. According to Ruiz, Suarez maintaineth that "God's promises are but naked assertions, by which he declareth his will to give the benefit." And Durandus saith, that "God's promises signify not any obligation, but the mere disposition of God's liberality." And Greg. Arim. "that the crown of righteousness is not a debt, but only of God's free ordination." And Marsil absolutely denieth, that God "is a debtor, nor doth any otherwise express his acceptance of mens deserts, than by the free disposition of a free gift." Scotus holdeth our acts are called merit as relating to God's free covenant or promise to reward them, and not otherwise, but he ab-

solutely denieth that God is thereby made our debtor.

ANT. But sure Luthier, and his fellow reformers, had never so much inveighed against the papists in the point of works, merits and justification, if they had all taught no worse than these which you have cited; there are certainly many others that say worse.

SOP. No question but the ignorance of the priests was so great, and carnal ends so powerful with covetous proud men, which were served by the abuse of the doctrine of merits and good works, that multitudes of such did ordinarily abuse it: if all protestants taught the protestant doctrine uncorruptly, we should not have had so many differences and divisions as we have had; nor would one condemn another as you do us.

ANT. But though the old schoolmen might mean better, those that Luther had to do with, did sure speak much worse.

SOP. I tell you, the carnal and ignorant sort of priests and friars, did each man talk according to his model, and so do all sects; few had the wit and skill to open aright the common doctrine: but our Dr. Field undertaketh to prove, that excepting the tyrannical papal faction, and the covetous and ignorant that served their ends, and by violence bore down the rest, the chief of the doctors in the church of Rome itself, did hold:

The great doctrines which the protestants against the papists do assert. To tire you with no more, I will cite but two of Luther's own adversaries in his days. The first is the learned cardinal Contacenus, who lived in the time of Luther's reformation. Read but his notes on Luther's articles, and his tract. of justification, free-will and predestination, and you will see that he saith almost as much for what you plead, as you would do yourself. I am loth to tire you with a citation of his words at large ; turn to them and read them, and see where he differeth from us. I confess the man was moderate ; but never accused as differing herein from the church of Rome, in any article determined by their councils : but their doctors variously express themselves.

The other is Fisher, bishop of Rochester, one of the chief martyrs of the Roman cause, beheaded by Henry VIII, for denying his supremacy in causes ecclesiastical : who in *opuscul. de fiducia & misericordia dei*, printed Colon. 1556. speaketh as much and plainly for the interest of faith and mercy, and Christ's redemption, as protestants usually do.

ANT. Would you have me so uncharitable as to suspect so many protestant writers of calumny ?

SOP. It is no calumny to charge on papists or any others what they really hold. It is per-

verse charity to receive unproved accusations of any, for fear of suspecting the accusers of calumny. By that rule all the false reports that now fly about in London should be received, if a good man or woman, especially if many, have once spoken them. And tell me whether you would have others observe the same rule towards you? For instance, you may see in Tolet, a cardinal Jesuit, on the Romans, that he charged the hereticks, as he calleth us, with holding that God doth only hide or not impute our sins, without mortifying them. Whereas we all hold, that he remiteth sins past; but that he mortifieth the present habits of sin, and preventeth its reign for the future in such as shall be saved. Which is the same in sense as they teach themselves. So he chargeth us as holding that we have no inherent righteousness after justification, no not imperfect, but only Christ's righteousness imputed; and that we hold obedience unnecessary to our final justification: all which is false. And shall the unlearned papists believe this of us, for fear of an uncharitable suspicion of their teachers? for multitudes of their writers falsly charge us with the same errors.

ANT. The papists are liars, and therefore to be suspected; but so are not our divines.

SOP. If once you fall upon such rules as



this, that “ accusations against adversaries are to “ be believed without proof on one side and not “ on the other,” God’s rule against receiving evil reports will be set aside, charity and justice excluded, and mere siding and faction possess the place: and then all the question will be, “ Who are those accusers that are to be believed?” If you think that it is your teachers, the papists, who have many more, will think they have more reason to believe them: and so the anabaptists will believe theirs, and the separatists theirs, and the quakers theirs: and what falsehood and evil will not then be believed against all parties? and how odious will they appear to one another, and consequently all christians to infidels and heathens?

ANT. A man that is set upon a sodering design, may palliate any heresy in the world, and put a fair sense on the foulest words; but God hateth such cloaking of sin, and compliance with it.

SOP. May not papists, familists, quakers, and all sects, say the same against concord and compliance with you? I pray you tell me what you think of these following words, before you know who wrote them; and take heed what you say of them, lest you strike you know not whom.

Quest. "How is justification free, seeing  
 " faith and repentance are required to it ?

" Answ. There are two answers given ; one  
 " is from Augustines doctrine, Epist. 105. the  
 " sum is, as justification is taken comprehen-  
 " sively, including faith and repentance as its  
 " beginning, it is free, because faith is free : but  
 " as it is taken narrowly for justification follow-  
 " ing faith, that is, for remission of sin, and re-  
 " conciliation with God, it is merited by faith.  
 " But the other solution I more approve, and it  
 " seemeth more agreeable to scripture : to wit,  
 " that even remission of sin itself and reconcilia-  
 " tion with God, are given freely, no merit of  
 " ours going before, and that neither by faith nor  
 " repentance we do merit the gift of this grace.  
 " For understanding of which, note, that faith  
 " hath not of itself any efficacy as it is our act,  
 " to remit or reconcile ; but all the virtue pro-  
 " ceedeth from the object itself, that is, Christ ;  
 " whose virtue and merit God hath determined  
 " to apply to a sinner for his justification by faith  
 " in him : and what I say of faith, I say of repen-  
 " tance, and other dispositions, as in the exam-  
 " ple of them that looked to the brazen serpent,  
 " who were healed by looking : not that looking,  
 " as it was an act of the eye, had such a healing  
 " force ; but the efficacy was from the serpent,

“ which God had appointed for the cure. So  
 “ we say of faith, which hath not in its nature  
 “ and from its entity any power to remit and re-  
 “ concile, but as the virtue of Christ doth this  
 “ in believers : and so I answer, that if faith jus-  
 “ tifieth as an act and of itself, justification were  
 “ not free. But so it doth not, but it is a medium  
 “ by God’s good pleasure, by which the virtue  
 “ of Christ justifieth believers : therefore faith,  
 “ or repentance, make it not less free. *e. g.* I  
 “ give a beggar a gift : he puts forth his hand  
 “ and taketh it : if one tell me thou gavest it not  
 “ freely, because he took it, or else he would not  
 “ have had it, it were a ridiculous objection : for  
 “ putting forth the hand doth not of itself bring  
 “ him a gift ; else every time he put forth his hand  
 “ it would do the same : but it is from the virtue  
 “ and bounty of the giver. So it is as to faith  
 “ and the dispositions by which the virtue of  
 “ Christ, and the free mercy of God do give re-  
 “ mission and reconciliation : so that it taketh  
 “ not away Christ’s merits, nor maketh grace  
 “ less free, that faith or these dispositions are  
 “ asserted.”

ANT. I know not how much men may mean  
 worse than they speak : but these words are such  
 as the best protestants use.

SOP. They are the words translated of the  
 aforesaid Fr. Tolet, a Jesuit and Cardinal, on

Rom. iii. page 157, 158, 159. But still remember, that by justification they mean the holy effect of the Spirit on the soul; and indeed by remission of sin, they most commonly mean the destroying or mortifying sin within us, and ceasing to commit the act: and they are dark and confused in these matters.

ANT. You confess then their confused doctrine, and you cannot excuse many of their doctors from gross error herein.

SOP. No, nor many honest pious persons that go for protestants. Who can justify all the sentiments and phrases of some of the most wise and accurate divines amongst ourselves? for when all are much ignorant, who can say I do not err?

ANT. But undoubtedly you will be as bitterly censured for these your favourable interpretations of the papists in the point of merit, as if you were half a papist yourself, and were but such a mongrel as Erasmus, Wicelius, Cassander, or Grotius; or as if your conciliatory designs would carry you as far at last as Grotius, Militerius, Baldwin, or at least as Montague, Guil. Forbes, and such others went. And some will then say, that you are justly served for writing so much against Grotius and his followers on this account as you have done, of which Bishop Bram-

hall, and his Epistoler, have already told you.

SOP. Truth, honesty, and God's approbation, change not as mens interests, minds or tongues do. Time will come, that truth will be more regarded, when love and peace are to be revived ; unless God will forsake this contentious and unrighteous world. And I am so near, so very near that world, where there is nothing but truth, love and righteousness, and where God is all, and the fulness and felicitating object of holy souls, and where the censures of men are of no signification, that I am utterly inexcusable, if I betray the cause of truth, love, and concord, to avoid the obloquy of men, who speak speak evil of the things they never understood.

## DIALOGUE III.

*Sophron and Zelotes.*

SOPHRON. **N**EIGHBOUR, I understand that you are one of those who divulge your defamatory lamentations of me as inclining to popery, for some passages which I lately preached in the city : I pray you speak that to my face which you so freely speak behind my back.

ZELOTES. Sir, the city ringeth of you as one that greatly wrongeth the cause of God, and my own ears heard you say that the difference between us and the papists is little more than in ambiguous words, and points unsearchable.

SOP. And this I hear you are one who have divulged, and so it is by such as you that the city is made to ring of it. That which I said was this : “ I distinguished the controversies between  
 “ us and the papists into such as depend on a car-  
 “ nal mind and interest, and such as do not, but  
 “ arise from the mere difficulty of the subject :  
 “ in the former sort I said our differences are very  
 “ great, and like to be so ; and such are the dif-  
 “ ferences about their papal power and church

“ state, their government, and worship as fitted  
 “ thereunto ; and many doctrines, as that of pur-  
 “ gatory, indulgence, auricular confession abused  
 “ by them, transubstantiation, &c. But that the  
 “ other sort of doctrinals, such as predestination,  
 “ the cause of sin, man’s power and free-will,  
 “ certainty of salvation, and I might have added,  
 “ justification and merit as held by their church  
 “ and most of their schoolmen, are made by many  
 “ the subjects of greater difference than there is  
 “ cause ; not that here is no difference indeed ;  
 “ but that long study hath made me certain that  
 “ it is more in words than is commonly conceiv-  
 “ ed : and this truth is fit to be spoken though  
 “ the mistaken be offended by it. Yea in these  
 “ matters the papists differ among themselves as  
 “ much as with us.” Dare you deny that these  
 were my words ?

ZEL. When you speak so cloudily, who can remember every word you say ?

SOP. Is not this plain English ? And dare you carry false reports abroad on pretence of pious zeal, and then say, *you cannot remember* ? Why would you report that which you cannot remember ? Why would you not stay till you had helped your memory, by speaking with me or some one that could have informed you ? But are not we in a hard case with such hearers as you, when we must look to be as oft calumniated as your under-

standing or your memory faileth? because your loose concience faileth with them: which is very oft.

ZEL. I am not alone in judging thus of you; city and country ring of it: what company can one come into where you are not talked of? I daily hear good people lament you: and the best that they say is, that God useth to let those men fall foully in some things who have been extraordinarily serviceable, that men may not idolize them.

SOP. They that know me but half so well as I know myself, will know that I have enough to abase me before God and man: but will that warrant a course of lying and slandering in others? Do you partly receive and partly propagate false reports, and then plead the commonness for your excuse? He that set London on fire might so have excused himself because the flame was common when he caused it. The effect and prospering of your sin should humble you and not be made to justify you. But yet I must tell you that backbiting sectaries are not the greater part of London: there are many sober people who are ashamed of your sin and folly.

I will make this friendly motion to you: let us here to one anothers faces, so friendly admonish each other of that which we take to be sin, as may help to bring each other to repentance:



and do you begin, tell me of all the evil that you know by me.

ZEL. I have nothing to accuse you of, but that your principles are too large, and you vent them too freely, and thereby you harden papists, and dishonour the protestant cause, and wrong free grace, and the righteousness of Christ, by your doctrine of justification and man's righteousness.

SOP. As to my doctrine of justification, if I have not fully justified it elsewhere, I shall not now on this occasion. But whether you or I be right about popery, let us now debate. Have you read the several treatises I have published upon this subject?

ZEL. I have somewhat else to do than read all your writings.

SOP. Why have you not then somewhat else to do than backbite me, and judge of things which you have not leisure to understand? Do we not deal on hard terms with such men as you? that neither speaking nor writing can make them know our minds? Has any one of your party that revile me, done more against popery than I have done? But if this be all you have to call me to repentance for, I have a great deal more to say against myself: and now I will deal faithfully with you: I beseech you seriously to lay to heart the following considerations:

What a shame is it for one that would be taken for a religious man to be so *ignorant* as you are, and no better able to distinguish the truth of Christ from the errors of popery, that it appeareth you are?

What a sin for one so ignorant to be so rash and bold in venturing to judge of that which he understandeth not?

What a sin is it for one so ignorant to be so proud of his pretended knowledge, as to venture to defame his teachers for contradicting him in his erroneous conceits? Have you studied these things as long and hard as I have done? or are you sure that you have done it more impartially, and that God hath illuminated you so much more, as your confidence would import?

What an unchristian conduct is it to make lies and carry them abroad of your teachers, and then be forced to confess, that it was the failing of your memory as to what you heard?

What a sin is it to be a backbiter? Neither you, nor any one of your quality, did ever come to my face, either to know my meaning, or to hear what I had to say, nor to reprove my sin, or convince me of any error.

Is not unrighteousness a sin in your judging and reports, as it is in publick judgments? Should not a man be heard before he be condemned? especially a minister of Christ?

What a sin is it to receive false reports from others, and encourage backbiters whom you should rebuke and frown away ?

What an heinous sin is it thus to destroy the hearers souls, and as those that have the plague, to carry your infection from house to house, and kill mens love, and breed in them false conceits and bitter injurious thoughts of others ?

What a sin is it with such unthankfulness to requite Christ's servants that spend their days, and strength, and estates in labouring for men's good ? When I take none of your money, when I have these twelve years preached as I had liberty, freely without hire ; when I had been put on to plead the non-conformists cause in the costliest circumstances, and to bear the greatest *odium* for it ; when I was, I think the first that was silenced on such accounts ; when I have been twelve or fourteen years deprived of all ecclesiastical maintenance ; when I refused a bishoprick ; when I have laboured in writings and other duties to the consuming of my flesh in daily and hourly pain and weakness, and now look upon every sermon as my last, and am ready to appear before my Judge : to be to the very last thus calumniated and reviled by peevish sectaries, would be a sad reward, were your favour my reward. But is this just or grateful ? or shall the unrighteous and unthankful be accounted the best men ? I know

I could have been one of the highest in your favour and applause, if I would have humoured and followed you : but I had rather that God should keep me from your honour, than buy it at so dear a rate. And is it no sin thus to hinder the success of our labours, by making us odious or suspected by them that should profit by us ?

Is it not hypocrisy, to cry out of the bishops for silencing us, when you shew that you would fain do it yourselves ? Would not you silence me now if it were in your power ? Yea I doubt not but when I die, some of you will rejoyce and say, that God took me off in a way of judgment. And thus to make divisions among christians, who should hold the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, will one day be known to be a sin. And it is worst of all to father all this on truth and godliness, and use such names for so bad a cause. And it aggravateth your sin, that you take no more notice of all those plain and awful scriptures which as openly condemn your sin, as the sin of drunkards or swearers is condemned : were it but James iii. it would leave you utterly without excuse.

Yea, and that you can see the sins of such drunkards and swearers, yea, and see the mote in the eyes of one that doth but use a form or ceremony which you dislike, and cannot see

these beams in your own. For all these sins I admonish you presently to repent.

ZEL. Who is it that is censorious? you or I? Is it sin in your account, to open your sin?

SOP. I desire you to open it: but see now how hard a work repentance is, when such sins as these will not be confessed.

ZEL. Well, come to the cause itself: is it I or you that comply with papists?

SOP. I make that the business of this conference with you: It is not you only, but some wiser men than you, that look so much at the evil of popery, that they forget the evil of an unrighteous opposition, and of the other extreme: God's truth must be vindicated only by truth; and wisdom is best justified of her own children by wisdom. God hath no pleasure in fools, nor doth his glory need our lie. There is a time when the devil will seem to be against error and sin and so against popery: but it is in a way which shall promote it: which commonly is by ill-doing and over-doing. I tell you plainly, the cause of truth and reformation gets nothing by some men who seem most zealous for it. For an unstudied half-wise honest minister or private man, to believe false reports of the papists, to mistate controversies, to mix many errors of his own in his opposition, and to calumniate those that know more of

the matter as symbolizing with the papists, this is certainly serving the devil, how honest soever the instrument in the main may be.

ZEL. I perceive that you have an aching tooth at the protestant divines as well as at me: are you wiser than they all? or are you not warping to Grotianism which you have written against?

SOP. Among the protestant divines there are well studied, knowing, solid men, that understand what they say, such as bishop Usher, Dr. Chaloner, Dr. Field, Dr. White, Chillingworth, Morton, Davenport, Andrews, and many such; and abroad, Camero, Dallæus, Blondel, Le Blanc, Amyraldus, Placæus, Vossius, Junius, Martinius, Crocius, Bergius, Bucer, Musculus, Melanchthon, and many others: and there are ignorant, hot-headed, self-conceited men, that rave in extremes, as Gallus, Ambsdorffius, and their companions did against Georg. Major, for saying, *bona opera sunt necessaria ad salutem*. And it is no wonder, that the best churches have many such; and that they are the forwardest to judge and cry down, all who are not as ignorant as themselves.

ZEL. Is it not safest to get the farthest possible from antichrist and popery? Your study is to teach men how near they may come to sin without sin; and how to dance about the brink of

hell : for my part, I will be one of them that shall come out of Babylon, and partake not of her sins, nor touch the unclean thing, and that keep their garments undefiled ; and not one, that like you, is grown lukewarm by being over fond of unity and peace.

SOP. Uncleaness must not be touched, nor sin partaken of, nor lukewarm indifferency to sin entertained ; we must go as far from sin as we can. But poor deceived souls run into it, under the conceit of going far enough from it, and sometimes into greater than they avoid.

ZEL. What sin have such protestants run into in their opposition to popery ?

SOP. I will tell you some, 1. In doctrine : and 2. In the consequents and practice.

1. It is more than one injudicious protestant divine, that hath printed such unsound opinions as these in opposition to popery, for want of judgment. While they plead against the Romish false tradition, they have weakened faith, by denying that necessary use of historical tradition of scripture which christianity doth suppose : as others denied the necessary use of reason unto faith. They have wronged the church by undervaluing the tradition of the creed and the essentials of christianity, by other means besides the scriptures. They have much wronged the protestant cause, by denying the perpetual visibility of the

church, and almost given it away. And their denial of its universality, and confining it long to the Waldenses and such others, is an exceeding injury to the church and truth. And so is some men's over-doing, as to the scripture, who teach that we can be no surer of christianity, as delivered many years in baptism before any of the new testament was written, than we are that there is no one error in all the bible, by the carelessness of transcribers and printers, nor any human frailty in the phrase. And also their feigning the scripture perfection to consist in its being a particular determiner of all those circumstances of which it is only a general rule; and condemning every form of prayer, or ceremony as antichristian. And those that make justifying faith to be a certainty or full persuasion that we are elected and pardoned and shall be saved. And those who say, that to believe that I am justified is to believe God's word, or *fides divina*; either, as most hold because one of the premises is in scripture, or as Chamier saith, because the witness of the Spirit is God's word. And those who tell us that all who have true faith, are sure they have such, as Keckerman and too many others. And those, who in opposition to the popish government, confession, austerities, &c. do run into the contrary extreme, against due government, confession, self-denial, &c. And those who from uncertainties, or



*à minus notis*, do gather many conclusions against known truth.

I pass by such as the Antinomians, who subvert the gospel itself, by running into the contrary extreme from popery.

ZEL. You are as bad as some late writers, who thus lay scandal on the reformers themselves. If these were their faults, you should cover them, and not open them. This had been enough for a Romish Rabshakeh.

SOP. You know not what it is you say. This would be to prefer the honour of man before that of God, and to throw disgrace on his word and gospel, rather than on the errors of those of our party. But all men are liars, that is fallible, and God is true. He that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall have mercy, but he that hideth it, shall not prosper. Are there not with you, even with you also, saith the prophet, sins against the Lord our God? Why hath God recorded in scripture the faults of so many of his servants, and forced them to such open confession? I think the proud impenitence of many that will not confess their sin, nor even indure to be called to do it, lest religion be dishonoured, is that great dishonour to religion which God hath been long punishing us for. God will teach ministers and people when guilty, instead of pharisaical self-justification, to take open shame to

themselves, that the cause of religion, in the world may be vindicated and honoured.

ZEL. I think you would fain persuade us, that protestants are as bad as papists, and draw us into the Roman tents.

SOP. That is but your peevish inference; little do you know how much of popery itself you hold, while you think that you hate it so much more than I.

ZEL. You would make me believe any thing, if you make me think that I have more of popery than *you*.

SOP. Do you not agree with them in confining the catholick church to one sect or party? only they to their sect, and you to yours. Do you not agree with them in your vehement condemnation of dissenters? only they excommunicate and burn them: and you deny them your communion and reproach them: but their charity extendeth much further than yours, for you condemn more dissenters than they do.

Do you not agree with them in being superstitious, though not in the same way: they say, touch not, taste not, handle not some things, and you others; as for instance, you say that God hath forbidden forms of prayer, and many lawful circumstances of worship, &c. And I now intreat you, and all the servants of Christ, soberly to consider, whether treating sound doctrine and

practices as *antichristian*, and using that name as a bugbear for want of solid argument, and an injudicious running from popery into the contrary errors and extremes, hath not produced the following pernicious consequences.

Have not such men corrupted the gospel of Christ, by bringing in many doctrinal errors, and opening a door to the heretical to bring in more? Almost all the libertine antinomian errors, have been introduced by an injudicious opposition to popery, as if they were the vindication of election, free grace, Christ's righteousness, justification by faith, perseverance, in opposition to man's works and merits: and it is not to be denied, that these libertine doctrines do more contradict the gospel, than what the papists hold upon the same subjects. I know this to be true, whoever is offended at it: Aquinas, Scotus, Gabriel, Bellarmine, Pererius, Tolet, yea Vasquez, Suarez, and Molina, are not near so erroneous about justification, grace, faith and good works, as Richardson, Randal, Sympson, Towne, Crispe, Saltmarsh, and many such others are: yet how many religious people have I known, that have gloried in these errors, as the sweet discoveries of free grace!

Such erroneous extremes in opposition to popery, have greatly dishonoured the reformers and the reformation. When it cannot be denied that such errors are found among them, it maketh all

the reformation suspected : as was the case with Illyricus's doctrine of the substantiality of sin, and the non-necessity of good works to salvation ; with Osiander's doctrine of justification by God's essential righteousness ; and with many harsh passages in Piscator and Maccovius ; to name no more. What a stir have our later divines still with the papists, in defending some few harsh sayings of Luther, Calvin and Beza, about the *cause* of sin, and some such subjects ? But downright errors cannot be defended.

Your injudicious opposition greatly hardeneth the papists, and hindereth their conviction : when they find such errors in your writings, as that “ all are bound to believe they are elected “ and justified, and that this is the sense of the “ article, I believe the forgiveness of sin ; that “ we are reputed of God to have fulfilled all the “ law of innocency, habitually and actually in “ and by Christ, &c.” And when they read that such men lay the great stress of the reformation upon these, as the very cause of our rejecting Rome, and as the *articuli stantis aut cadentis ecclesiae*, what can more harden them to a confidence that we are hereticks, and that they are in the right ? As I have known protestants, who had been in danger of turning papists, if the error of transubstantiation, and some few others, had not been so palpable, as to resolve them, these men cannot

be in the right: so, many papists would probably have turned protestants, had they not met with some notorious errors in such injudicious adversaries.

Yea, we too well know, that your extremities have occasioned divers protestants to turn papists; and that some learned men, and such as have zealously run through many sects in opposition to popery, have been so confounded to find palpable errors taken for sound doctrine, and sound doctrine railed at as popery; and in observing the shameful contentions of all the sects among themselves; that it hath drawn them to think there is no prosperity of the church to be expected but where there is unity and concord; and no unity or concord to be hoped for among protestants; and therefore they must return for it to Rome: and Grotius professeth, that it was this moved him to go so far towards them as he did. And I must needs say, that I believe from my very heart, that the shameful divisions of protestants amongst themselves, is a far stronger temptation to turn men to popery, than any thing that is to be found among the papists to invite men to it: and that many are thus driven to it, that would not have been drawn.

And by calling good and lawful if not necessary things, *antichristian* and popish, you have made religious people ridiculous, and a scorn to

many that have more wit than conscience; as if we were all such humourous novices who would run mad by being frightened with the name of antichrist: and as they deride you for it as fanatical, so they the less fear popery itself. And in this manner you corrupt the peoples minds with a wrathful and contentious kind of religion, instead of exciting in them a zeal for love, and good works. Long experience assureth us that an angry zeal is easily kindled, but a lively faith, a confirmed hope of glory, a love to God and man, needs more to produce them.

**ZET.** Stay a little in the midst of your reproofs; would you persuade us to an union with antichrist, and to live in love and concord with the members of the devil? Are not the papists such? Have you no way to reconcile us to Rome, but by pleading for love and peace? Must we not contend earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints?

**SOP.** Were you persuadable, I would persuade you not ignorantly to contradict the truth of God, and call it popery; nor to set up certain false or incongruous notions, and pretend they are great and necessary verities; nor to make a stir for some odd unsound opinions, received upon trust from those that you thought best of, and to buz abroad suspicions of popery, against those that have more understanding and conscience.

than to imitate you; nor to fly in the faces of God's faithful servants, much less to slander and backbite them, as if they were antichristian, because they are not shamefully ignorant and deceived as you are: and I would persuade you to study and digest well what you take the boldness to speak against; and not to talk confidently and furiously against that which you never understood: for it is the fool that rageth and is confident, Prov. xiv. 16. I should think I had done a greater work than to build twenty such cities as London, or conquer all the Turks dominions, if I could but persuade all that seem religious to *bridle their tongues, lest their religion prove vain*; and instead of rash and busy talking of things that they understand not, and judging and reviling men wiser than themselves, to *suspend* their judgment, and stay till they have taken time to hear, read and consider what is necessary to the true understanding of the case, and not to dishonour themselves, abuse their brethren, and wrong and corrupt the hearer's mind, by railing at *that*, which if they study hard and grow wiser, they will afterwards believe themselves.

And I would not have you think it good or lawful to bely a papist, and say that he holdeth what he doth not; nor to pretend that they differ in the sense and matter, when the difference is but in the words: and then to think that all your in-

justice and false dealings is excusable, if you do but say that some godly divines, or religious people said so before you, and you can prove out of their writings that you are not the first that did the wrong: nor would I have you charge the unmeet or unsound expressions of every ignorant railing papist, on all their church: and therefore I would have you read and understand their writings before you venture too far in your accusations. You would not be otherwise dealt with yourself, nor like to have the protestant religion charged with every unwarrantable sentence, of the many weak writers that have self-esteem enough to obtrude their sentiments upon the world. The papists have too many errors, and too great: you need not feign them to be more or greater than they are.

And I would persuade you not to take all that live under the Roman power, and are called papists, to be of the same mind or rank, nor to condemn any more than you are sure Christ will condemn: but to consider what the judicious Dr. Field undertaketh, and Bp. Morton in his apology hath performed, even to prove that there are no considerable doctrines which constitute the protestant religion as different from popery, which were not before Luther's reformation defended by the greatest doctors in the church of Rome, though the defenders of them were discounte-



nanced and borne down by the power and violence of the papal faction.

And I would persuade you to believe that the name of antichrist will not warrant you to lay by that love and meekness and justice which is due to mankind, yea and which heathens use to each other, and which you would have all men use to you: *The servant of the Lord must not strive, but be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing opposers, and if it be possible, as much as lieth in us, we must live peaceably with all men,* and therefore should follow peace with all, Heb. x. 14. at least make conscience of rash calumniating and slandering the worst.

And let me again add, that hereby you make false glasses for the people to see their own faces in, and delude them with a carnal sort of religion and zeal, as if it were that which is true and saving. Men are loath to know that they are indeed unholy: and therefore will be pretending to some kind of religion to cherish their presumption, for want of sounder comfort: and how many thousands are there who think they are godly persons, because they can rise up in the dark with confident reproach against this or that opinion or practice as coming too near to popery! You teach a dangerous way of reasoning *à minus notis*, which will let in almost any errors: from an obscure text in

the Revelations, or Daniel, or from the supposition that the pope is antichrist, and all papists have received the mark of the beast, you gather conclusions against the undeniable duties of love and peace, which the light of nature doth commend to all: not that I am persuading you that the pope is not antichrist; but that all things be received according to their proper degree of evidence.

ZEL. Now you open yourself indeed: all that revolt to popery begin there, with questioning whether the pope be antichrist, and telling men of the darkness of the book of Revelations.

SOP. I tell you I will abate no certainty that you have; but what I would at present observe is, that those overdoers who run things into the contrary extremes, do most injuriously weaken the protestant cause, by disabling themselves, and all men of their principles, to defend it; and arming the papists against it by their errors. When it cometh to an open dispute by word or writing, one of these men's errors is like a wound that lets out blood and spirits; and puts words of triumph into the adversaries mouth: a cunning papist will presently drive the ignorant disputant to resolve his cause into his mistake, and then will open the falshood of that, and thence infer the falshood of all the rest: and what an injury is this to the souls of the auditors, who may be betrayed

by it, and to the cause itself? For instance, if one of our over-doers hold that we are reputed to have kept all the law of innocency and merited salvation ourselves by Christ, or that no act of faith is justifying but the accepting of his righteousness, or that we have no righteousness which hath any thing to do in our justification, but only Christ's imputed merits, or that man's faith, love or obedience are not rewardable, &c. how easily will a papist open the falshood of such an opinion to the hearers, and then tell them that they may see by this who is in the right. And alas, what work would one learned papist make in London by public disputing, if we had no wiser men to deal with him than those over-doers? They may call truth and sobriety antichristian, and talk nonsense against popery successfully to their own party; but I hope never to see the cause managed by their publick disputes, lest half the congregation turn papists at once. If Chillingworth had not been abler to confute a papist than those who use to calumniate him as popish or Socinian, he had done less service of that kind than he did.

And it is an odious injury that these over-doers commit against the ancient churches and fathers, while in many cases, they ignorantly or wilfully reproach and condemn them, as if they were all the favourers of popery, and call their ancient doctrine and practice antichristian. Some

of them ignorantly falsify their doctrine, and upon trust from their leaders aver that they held that which they plainly contradict; and that which they held indeed, they cry out against as popery. And will Christ take it well to have almost all his church condemned as antichristian?

And hereby what an honour is done to popery, and what a dishonour to the reformed churches, when it shall be concluded that all the ancient churches, even next after the age of the apostles, were against the doctrines of the protestants, and for that of the papists? yet how many do us this injury, and the Roman church this honour? Concerning the nature of justifying faith, and of justification itself, imputation of righteousness, free will, man's works and merits, and assurance of salvation and perseverance, how many call that popery, which the whole current of Greek and Latin fathers assert, and all the primitive churches owned: And those that call all forms of prayer, popery, (or the English liturgy at least,) when almost all the christian world have forms, and most such as are much worse, do but tell men that the christian world is on the side that they oppose, and against their way. Such are the real fruits of false, injurious, and ignorant zeal against the papists! and if popery revive, it is like to be by such methods.

ZEL. But popery is an heinous evil; and corrupt nature is so prone to evil, that you need not thus dissuade men from going too far from it, or from over-doing against it, no more than from being over righteous.

SOP. You may say the same as truly of the errors on the contrary extreme: all of them are evil, and we are all prone to evil: but little know you how common it is in the world for men to place their religion in a bitter opposition to one another's opinions, and to mistake a zeal for truth and orthodoxy, for real holiness; thereby strengthening the mortal evil of their own carnal affections and passions, and usually missing even of truth itself. And you know not the wiles of satan, how ordinarily he betrayeth a good cause by the ill management of its most zealous friends, and doth *undo* by *over-doing*.

EXTRACT OF A LETTER  
FROM THE  
REV. JOHN HOWE,  
TO  
MR. BOYLE.

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(SEE THE SECOND PREFACE.)

**M**Y purpose is not to move a dispute concerning the fitness of the words, *prescience* or *fore-knowledge*; or to trouble this discourse with notions I understand not, of the indivisibility, and unsuccessiveness of eternal duration; whence it would be collected there can be no such thing as *first* or *second*, fore or after-knowledge in that duration: but shall be contented to speak as I can understand, and be understood: *i. e.* to call *that* fore-knowledge which is the knowledge of somewhat that as yet is not, but which shall sometime come to pass.

Nor shall I design to myself so large a field as a treatise concerning the divine prescience, so

as to be obliged to discourse particularly whatsoever may be thought to belong to that theological topick. But shall confine myself only to such considerations as may some way tend to expedite or alleviate the following difficulty, viz. “ How  
 “ it can stand with the wisdom and sincerity of  
 “ the blessed God, to use means with a visible  
 “ design to prevent *that*, which notwithstanding  
 “ appears to his all-seeing eye sure to come to  
 “ pass.”

It is one of the greatest injuries to religion, a subversion indeed of its very foundations, under pretence of attributing perfection to the divine Nature, to ascribe to it inconsistencies, or to give a self-repugnant notion of that adorable Being. And yet equal care is to be taken, lest while we endeavour to frame a consistent notion of God, we reject from it any thing that is truly a perfection, and so give a maimed one. Whereby we should undo our own design, and by our over-much caution to make our conception of him agree with itself, make it disagree to him. For to *an absolutely perfect being*, no other can agree than that which is not only free from contradiction, but which also comprehends in it all real perfections, either explicitly, or which leaves room for all, by not positively excluding any.

It cannot be unobserved by thinking men, that it is very incident to our minds to grasp at

more than they can compass ; and then, through their own scantiness, like the little hand of a child, to throw away one thing that hath pleased us, to make room for another ; nor is it strange that our so straitly limited understandings should not be able to lodge commodiously the immense perfections of a Deity, so as to allow them liberty to spread themselves in our thoughts in their entire proportions : and because we cannot, we complain when we feel ourselves a little pinched, that the things will not consist ; when the matter is, we have unduly crowded and huddled them up together in our incomprehensive minds, that have not distinctly conceived them.

And though this consideration should not be used for the protection of an usurped liberty, of fastening upon God, arbitrarily and at random, what we please ; we ought yet to think it seasonably applied, when we find ourselves urged with difficulties on one hand and on the other ; and apprehend it hard, with clearness and satisfaction, to ascribe to God, what we also find it not easy not to ascribe.

Nor would it be less unfit to apply it for the patronage of that slothfulness wherein our discouraged minds are sometimes too prone to indulge themselves.

To which purpose I remember somewhat very apposite in Minucius Felix, that many through



the mere tediousness of finding out the truth, do rather, by a mean succumbency, yield to the first specious shew of any opinion whatsoever, than be at the trouble by a pertinacious diligence, of applying themselves to a thorough search.

Though the comprehension of our minds be not infinite, it might be extended much farther than usually it is, if we allowed ourselves with patient diligence to consider things at leisure, and so gradually to stretch and enlarge our own understandings. Many things have carried the appearance of contradiction and inconsistency to the first view of our straitened minds, which afterwards we have, upon repeated consideration and endeavour, found room for, and been able to make fairly accord and lodge together.

For though in matters of mere speculation, we may be encountered with difficulties whereof no mortal can ever be able to find out the solution, which is no great prejudice, and may be gainful and instructive to us ; yet as to what concerns the object of our religion, it is to be hoped we are not left in unextricable entanglements ; nor should think we are till we have made the utmost trial. The design being not to gratify our curiosity, but to relieve ourselves of uncomfortable doubtfulness in the matter of our worship, and to vindicate it against the cavils of ill-minded men.

But if the unsuccessfulness of often repeated

endeavours, make us despair of being able with full satisfaction, to reconcile some things which we have thought were to be attributed to God ; it will be some relief to us, if we find the things about which the doubt lies are not of the same order, nor such as with equal evidence and necessity are to be affirmed of him ; and that we may find ourselves at a certainty concerning those his attributes which most commonly and at the first view, approve themselves to every man's understanding.

Among which we little hesitate, (as we are most concerned not to do,) about those which carry with them the import of *moral goodness*, and which render the object of our religion, at once, both most venerable and lovely. For none do more naturally obtain for common notions concerning him, so as even to prevent all reasoning or argument, with whomsoever the apprehension of his existence hath place.

Every man's mind, it being once acknowledged that there is a God, refuses to conceive otherwise of him, than that he is holy, just, merciful, true, &c. and rejects with abhorrency, the notion of an unrighteous, cruel, deceitful deity.

As for those opinions that are deduced by a long train of abstract reasoning, they are to be regarded with less confidence. For it is evident,

that what is a natural impression stamped as it were by the hand of God himself on every man's mind, hath more of certainty than what depends on metaphysical subtlety; whereof so very few are capable, and whereby divers pretenders thereto, do so frequently (and perhaps very dangerously) ensnare themselves. And it is of far greater importance such a notion of God be entertained, whereby he may be rendered amiable, and an inviting object of love, the very life and soul of all religion, than such as shall be the result and entertainment only of scholastic wit.

Yet it is also very manifest, that man is now become a degenerate creature, in an apostacy from God, and is very little to be trusted with the framing his own idea of him; being certainly most unapt to allow any thing a place in it, that would have an unfavourable aspect upon his vicious inclinations and his guilty state. And the contagion of man's sinfulness having spread itself as far as he hath propagated his own nature, so as that no notion in his mind can be more common than the perversion and distemper of his mind itself; the possibility and danger is very obvious, of mistaking a dictate of depraved nature for an authentic *common notion*. And though these are not impossible to be distinguished, and in some cases very easy, as when men find it imposed unavoidably upon them, to apprehend and acknowledge

some things which they are very unwilling should be true ; in which case their sentiments have the same right to be believed as the testimony of an enemy on the opposite party's behalf ; we have yet no reason to neglect any other means, whereby we may be directed how to conceive of God, or what we are to attribute to him, and what not.

Nor can we be at a greater certainty than in admitting such things to belong to the blessed God as he plainly affirms of himself ; or any way, by his word, evidently discovers to belong to him. *For as none knows the things of a man, but the spirit of a man that is in him, so the things of God are known to none but the Spirit of God.*— And though we should meet with some things in the scriptures, which to us seem not at first sight to agree with one another, our endeavour must be the more solicitous, as also it ought to be the more modest, to discuss and remove the semblance of disagreement.

And whoever peruses that venerable book, will find every were proclaimed and magnified in it, what our own minds cannot but have been prepossessed of, *the most exquisite wisdom of God*, whereby he forms and contrives the methods of all his dispensations, and disposes them in the aptest subserviency to his own great and most important ends ; that *all his ways are judgment* ; and that he worketh all things according to the

*counsel* of his will. Nor are we therefore to think it strange, if many times we are not able to trace him out, or understand the reason of every thing he thinks fit to do : for the paths of the more perfect wisdom must therefore be expected to be the more abstruse, and remote from common apprehension.

How often do we find ourselves so far outgone by wise and sagacious men, as that we are sometimes constrained to confess and admire their great prudence and conduct, when they have effected their purposes, in those managements, which we have before beheld, either with silent ignorance, or perhaps, not without censure. How much less should the wisest of men regret to find all their conjectures exceeded by infinite Wisdom. In the contemplation whereof we find the great apostle, notwithstanding the vast capacity of his divinely enlightened understanding, exclaiming in a transport, *O the depths!* And when our eyes tell us, from the stupendous effects of creation, how far we are exceeded by him in power, it were reasonable to expect he should surpass us proportionably in the contrivancies of his wisdom also.

And whereas the conjunction is rare among men of deep political wisdom, with integrity and strict righteousness ; this proceeds commonly from the imperfection and insufficiency of the former ;

because they know not often how to compass their designs, unless by supplying their want of wisdom out of the spoil and violation of their justice and honesty ; otherwise these are things not so altogether out of credit in the world, but that men would rather accomplish their purposes by fair and unexceptionable means, if they could tell how. Only the respect and deference they have for them, is less than what they bear to their own interests and ends.

But besides the natural inflexible rectitude of the divine will, we are secured, from his *all-sufficiency*, that we shall never be fraudulently imposed upon by any of his declarations unto the children of men : for there is nothing to be gained by it ; and we cannot conceive, what inducement he should have to make use of any so mean and pitiful shifts for the governing of his creatures, whom he spontaneously raised out of nothing, and hath so perfectly within his power.

Unless we should be so most intolerably injurious to him, as to imagine a worse thing of him than we would of the worst of men, that he loved falsehood for its own sake : and *that*, against his so constantly professed detestation of it, the declared repugnancy of it to his nature, and the constant tenor of his word, every where agreeing with itself herein, so often describing him by that property, *God that cannot lie*. And with the same

determinateness, avowing his own uprightness, and requiring it, expressing his great love to it, and the high delight he takes to find it in his intelligent creatures—*The righteous God loveth righteousness, and with his countenance doth he behold the upright.*

Nor is his testimony the less to be regarded, for that it is laudatory and of himself. For we are to consider the prerogative of him that testifies, and that if his testimony were not credible of itself, he were not God. Besides that his giving us this, or any representation of himself, to whom it were enough to enjoy his own perfections, is a *vouchsafement*, and done of mere grace and favour to us, that we may by it be induced to place with satisfaction our unsuspecting trust and confidence in him. And further we may observe, that, in all this, he says no other thing of himself, than what our own minds, considering him as God, must acknowledge most worthy of him, and agreeing to him with the most apparent necessity.

This part, therefore, of the idea of God hath so firm a foundation, both in the natural complexion of our own minds, and the report which his word makes of him, that on this hand we are hemmed in as by a wall of adamant; and cannot have the thought of defending his prescience, by intrenching upon his wisdom and truth without

offering the highest violence both to him and ourselves.

On the other hand, as it is a higher perfection to know all things at once, than by degrees; and nothing is more certain than that all possible perfection must belong to God; so we find his own word asserting to him that most perfect knowledge which excludes the possibility of increase. For how plainly is it affirmed of him that he *knows all things*; even concerning future events, the affirmation is express and positive; *I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from antient times the things that are not yet done.*

Nor is the affirmation naked, and unfortified. For we have the same thing both affirmed and proved in the sacred records, that contain many express prophecies, to which events have so punctually corresponded as to leave no place for doubt or cavil. Instances are so plain and well known that they need not be mentioned. And surely what was so expressly foretold could not but have been foreknown.

It seems then an attempt equally hopeless and unrelieving, as it were adventurous and bold, to offer at the protection of his *wisdom* and *sincerity*, by assaulting his *prescience* or certain foreknowledge of whatsoever shall come to pass.

For if it appeared but in one single instance,



that the blessed God did foreknow and ~~dehort~~ dehort from the same act, it will be plainly consequent that his warnings and dehortations from wicked actions in the general, can with no pretence be alledged as a proof against his universal prescience. For if the argument, “ he dehorted from the doing such an action, therefore he did not foreknow it,” would be able to conclude any thing, it must be of sufficient force to conclude universally; which it cannot do, if but a single instance can be given wherein it is apparent, he did both dehort and foreknow. It can at most only raise the doubt which we have in hand to discuss, *how fitly*, and with what wisdom and sincerity, he can be understood to interpose his counsels and monitions in such a case.

Wherefore nothing remains but to consider, how these may be reconciled and made appear to be no way inconsistent with one other. Nor are we to apprehend herein so great a difficulty, as it would be to reconcile his irresistible pre-determinative concurrence to all actions of the creature, *even those that are in themselves sinful*, with the wisdom and righteousness of his laws against them, and severest punishments of them according to those laws.

Which sentiments must, I conceive, to any impartial understanding, leave it no way sufficiently explicable, how the influence and concur-

rence the holy God hath to the worst of actions, is to be distinguished from that which he affords to the best ; or how such inherently evil actions are less, nay not much more to be imputed to him who forbids them, than to the malicious tempter who prompts to them, or to the actor that does them ; and they make it undeniable that the matter of his laws, in reference to all such actions that ever have been done in the world, was a simple and most strictly natural impossibility. Nothing being more apparently so, than not to do an action whereto the agent is determined by an infinite power.

And though many considerations have been with great subtilty alledged and urged to this purpose, by former and some modern writers, which it is besides the present design particularly to discuss, these two, which seem the most important and enforcing, will, I conceive, be found of little force ; and then the rest may be safely omitted.

It is alledged first, that it necessarily belongs to the original and fountain being, to be the first cause of all other beings ; and consequently that what there is of positive being in any the most wicked actions, must principally owe itself to the determinative productive influence of this first and sovereign cause. Otherwise it would

seem there were some being that was neither *primum* nor a *primo*.

And again, which we are more concerned to consider, because it more relates to our present subject, that it were otherwise impossible God should foreknow the sinful actions of men, many whereof, as hath been observed, he hath foretold if their futurition were a mere contingency, and depended on the uncertain will of the subordinate agent, not determined by the supreme.

But neither of these will warrant the dismal conclusion of God's concurring by a determinative influence unto wicked actions.

Not the former; for it may well be thought sufficiently to salve the rights and privilege of the first cause, to assert that no action can be done but *by a power derived from it*; which, in reference to forbidden actions, intelligent creatures may use or not use as they please, without overasserting, that they must be irresistibly determined also, even to the worst of actions done by them. Besides that it seems infinitely to detract from the perfection of the ever blessed God, to affirm he was not able to make a creature of such a nature, as, being continually sustained by him, and supplied with power every moment suitable to its nature, should be capable of acting; unless whatsoever he thus enables, he determine it to do also.

And except it were affirmed impossible to God to have made such a creature, *i. e.* that it implied a contradiction, which certainly can never be proved, there is no imaginable pretence why it should not be admitted he hath done it: rather than so fatally expose the wisdom, goodness, and righteousness of God, by supposing him to have made laws for his reasonable creatures impossible, through his own irresistible counteraction, to be observed: and afterwards to express himself displeas'd, and adjudge his creatures to eternal punishments, for not observing them.

I am not altogether ignorant what attempts have been made to prove it impossible; nor again what hath been done to manifest the vanity of those attempts. But I must confess a greater disposition to wonder, that ever such a thing should be disputed, than to dispute so plain a case; and that a matter whereupon all moral government depends, both human and divine, should not have been determin'd at the first sight.

It is not hard for a good wit to have somewhat to say for any thing. But to dispute against the common sense of mankind, we know beforehand, is but to trifle; like the essay to prove the impossibility of local motion.

The notion of the goodness and righteousness of God, methinks, should stick so close to our minds, and create such a sense in our souls, as

should be infinitely dearer to us than all our senses and powers. And that we should rather choose to have our sight, hearing, and all our faculties disputed, or even torn away from us, than ever suffer ourselves to be disputed into a belief, that the holy and good God should irresistibly determine the wills of men to, and punish the same thing. Nor is it difficult to urge more puzzling sophisms against the former, than for the latter.

But the efforts of a sophistical wit against sense, and more against the sense of our souls, and most of all against the entire sum and substance of all morality and religion at once, are but like the attempt to batter a wall of brass with straws and feathers.

And no wonder this is the case, when the strength of the assault lies in an argument so perfectly vain and unsatisfactory. For I would appeal to the quick refined sense of any sober and pious mind, after serious, inward consultation with itself; being closely urged, with the horror of so black a conception of God, “ that  
 “ he should be supposed irresistibly to determine  
 “ the will of a man to the hatred of his own most  
 “ blessed self, and then to exact severest punish-  
 “ ments for the offence done;” what relief and satisfaction it would now be to it, to be only

taught to reply, “that man is under the law, and God above it.”

Is this a reason calculated to work conviction in a considerate mind? What! that God should make a law, and necessitate the violation of it! and yet also punish that violation! and this be thought a sufficient salvo, that himself is not subject to any law! Will a tender spirit, wounded by so unsufferable indignity offered the holy God, be any wit eased or relieved, by the thin sophistry of employing the word *law* in an ambiguous manner, which sometimes indeed signifies *the declared pleasure of a ruler to a subject*, in which sense any eye can see God can be under no law, having no superior; but not seldom also, *an habitual fixed principle and rule of acting after one steady tenor*; in which sense how manifest is it, that the perfect rectitude of God’s own holy gracious nature is an eternal law to him, infinitely more stable and immutable, than the ordinances of day and night!

Wherefore dismissing the impracticable attempts of some to defend God’s predeterminative concurrence unto sinful actions; our encounter must only be of the more superable difficulty, to reconcile his prescience of them, with his provisions against them, *i. e.* how fitly the wise and holy God can have interposed his precautions and dissuasions, in their own nature aptly tending to withhold

and divert men from those evil actions, which he yet foresees they will commit.

And it is in the first place evident, there is no such repugnancy in the matter as shall amount to a contradiction; since there is plainly neither affirmation nor negation in merely *fore-knowing* an action, or *dehorting* from it; and if the sense of both be resolved into propositions capable of being confronted to one another, all that can be made of the former will only come to this, “you will do such [a thing;” and of the latter, “you ought not to do it :” which are at as great distance as can be imagined from jarring with one another.

And wherein is the unfitness that both these *effata* should proceed from the mouth of a governor, or one that hath authority over others?

We will for discourse sake, suppose a prince endowed with the gift or spirit of prophecy, And suppose we this his prophetic ability so large, as to extend to all events that shall fall out within his dominions. Is it hereby become unfit for him to govern his subjects by his laws, or any way admonish them of their duty? Hath this perfection so much diminished him as to depose him from his government?

It is not indeed to be dissembled, that it were a difficulty to determine whether such foresight were, *for himself*, better or worse. Boundless

knowledge seems only in a fit conjunction with as unbounded power. But it is altogether unimaginable that it should destroy his relation to his subjects. And what of it were left, if it should despoil him of his legislative power, and capacity of governing according to laws.

And to bring back the matter to the supreme ruler. Let it for the present be *supposed* only, that the blessed God possesses the universal prescience whereof we are discoursing; we must surely, upon that supposition, acknowledge it to be a perfection.

And were it reasonable to affirm that by a perfection he is disabled for government? Or were it a good consequence, “ he foreknows all things, he is therefore unfit to govern the world !”

And that we may consider the matter more narrowly; would the supposition of such foreknowledge in God, make that cease to be man’s duty which had otherwise been so, and take away the differences of good and evil? Would it nullify the obligations of God’s law, and make man’s own inclination his only rule? Or, if it be said, because it is foreknown, “ man will do such a thing,” therefore “ he may innocently do it;” where is the connection? For what influence can foreknowledge have at all to alter or affect either the nature of the thing foreknown, or the temper



of the person that shall do it ; any more than the present knowledge of the same thing now doing ? Which knowledge none would deny to God. Surely what is, in its own nature, good, or evil, cannot be otherwise, be it foreknown or not.

It may be said, all this meets not the objected difficulty, viz. how any means are reasonably used for an unattainable end. As it is manifest the end, *man's obedience* is such, when it is foreknown *he will not obey*.

It may here, before we proceed further, not be unseasonable to consider a matter wont to be much vexed in the schools, *how God may be said to act for any end at all*. And it appears very certain, that he, who is so every way absolutely perfect and happy, cannot be thought to intend and pursue an end, after the same manner as we are wont to do.

We being conscious to ourselves of indigency, or, at the best, of obligations to the author of our being, are wont to design this or that end either for our own relief, or the approving ourselves to him. And our satisfaction depending upon the attainment of it, we solicitously deliberate about the fittest means to attain it ; and are tossed with various passions, of desire, and hope, and fear, and joy, and grief, according as the end is apprehended more or less excellent, or likely to be attained ; varying often our course upon new

emergencies, as this or that may probably promote or hinder the success of our pursuit. In short, we pursue ends, as being both impatient of disappointment, and uncertain of their attainment.

The blessed God, being indigent of nothing, nor under obligation to any one, cannot be supposed to propound an end to himself as that whereupon his satisfaction depends, which were inconsistent with his already compleat felicity, and would argue him but potentially happy. But acting always from an immense self-sufficient fullness of life, and of all perfections, doth ever satisfy himself in himself, and take highest complacency in the perfect goodness, congruity, and rectitude of his own most holy will and way.

And again, as he doth not seek a yet unattained satisfaction, in any end he can be supposed to propound to himself; so neither can he be thought to deliberate, as we are wont to do, concerning the means of effecting any. For deliberation would imply doubtfulness and uncertainty, which his absolute perfection cannot admit, nor doth need; the whole frame and compass of things intended by him, in their references and tendencies, being at once present to his all comprehending view; so that there can be no place for any intermediate knowledge with him, or for any new

resolves thereupon. *Known to the Lord are all his works from the beginning of the world.*

This being premised, it is now further to be considered, that however one end oftentimes is not attained, unto which the publicly extant declarations of the divine will have a visible aptitude, viz. *the obedient compliance of men with them*; another more noble end was, however, attainable, not unbecoming the designment of the divine wisdom, and which it was every way most worthy of God to be principally intent upon.

It is fit the mention of this be prefaced with an obvious remark; that the misapprehension of the state of things between God and man doth, in great part, arise from our aptness to compare unduly the divine government with that of secular rulers; and our expectation to find them in all things agreeing with each other. Whereas there cannot but be a vast difference, between the constitution and end of God's government and that of man's

The government of secular, human rulers, can never be in the constitution of it, altogether absolute, nor ought, in the design of it, primarily to intend the personal advantage of the ruler himself, who as much depends upon his subjects, and hath at least, as great need of them, as they can be understood to have of him. But as to the blessed God it is apparent, that since he is the origi-

nal root of all being, and all things are mere dependencies upon his absolute pleasure, all ought to be to him, that he alone might have the glory.

Wherefore, it must be asserted, and cannot fail to be acknowledged, by every impartial and sober considerer of things, that there is a much more noble and important end, all God's publick edicts and declarations to men do more principally aim at, than their advantage, viz. *the dignity and decorum of his government itself*; that he may be found in every thing to have done as became him, and was most worthy of himself. And what could be more so, than that he should testify the aversion of his own pure, and holy nature, to whatever was unholy and impure, his love of righteousness, and complacency in those who thus imitate him, together with his steady gracious propension to receive such, through a Redeemer, into the communion of his own felicity and blessedness.

Nor are we to understand that he herein merely designs the reputation of his government; but we are to account these his declarations, although they are acts of an intelligent agent, and the products of wisdom and counsel, yet also the spontaneous emanations of his own holy, and gracious nature, such as wherein he most fully agrees and consents with himself. And is it now

to be expected, that, because he foresees men will be wicked, and do what shall be unworthy of them, he must therefore lay aside his nature, and omit to do what shall be worthy of himself?

And now it may be expected, that the more ingenuous and candid will allow themselves to think the matter tolerably clear in reference to the former part of the proposed difficulty; *i. e.* will apprehend this way of dealing with men not inconsistent with the *divine wisdom*, since, though one end, in a greater part, fail, yet another more valuable is attained.

But yet, as to the latter part, the difficulty may still urge, *viz.* how it can stand with the sincerity of the blessed God seemingly to design an end which he knows will fail of accomplishment.

In answer to this, that we may proceed gradually, we are next to consider, that the publick declarations of the divine will touching man's duty, do attain that very end, *viz.* "an obedient compliance therewith," in great part, and as to many, although it be foreknown they will prove ineffectual with the most; and are no less an apt than successful means of attaining it.

Nor certainly, if it were foreknown the world would be so divided, as that some would obey, and others not obey, was it therefore the fittest

course that these two sorts should, by some extraordinary act of providence, be carefully severed from each other; and the former be dealt with apart from the rest: but rather that the divine edicts should be of an universal tenor, and directed to all as they now are; the matter of them being of universal concernment, and equally suitable to the common case of all men.

Neither yet was it necessary, that effectual care should be taken they should actually reach all, and be applied to every individual person. Since it is apparently to be resolved into the wickedness of the world, that the gospel is not thus universally spread.

For whereas the merciful God hath done his own part, and so much beyond what was to be expected from him, having issued out his proclamations of peace and pardon, upon so easy and indulgent terms as are expressed in his gospel; if hereupon men also did their part, behaved themselves suitably to the exigency of their case, and as became reasonable creatures fallen under the displeasure of their Maker, whereof their condition affords so innumerable, so pregnant proofs; the gospel, wherever it had been known would have been entertained with so great a transport of joy, and so ready and universal acceptance, as very soon to have made a great noise in the world: and being found to be of an universal te-

nor and concernment, and that what it says to one nation, it equally says the same to all, it could not but be, that messengers would interchangeably have run from nation to nation; some to communicate, others to enquire after those strange tidings of great joy unto all people lately sent from heaven concerning the Emmanuel, God with us; God, again upon his return to man, and *now in Christ reconciling the world to himself*. And thus how easily, and *even naturally*, would the gospel soon have spread itself through the world? Especially the merciful God having so provided, that there should be an office constituted and set up; an order of men, whose whole business it should be, to propagate and publish those happy tidings.

But seeing men so indulge their sensual terrene inclinations, as not duly to use their understanding and considering powers, to *find out* who made them, and that things are not right, and as they should be, between him and them; and so by what is within the compass of natural revelation, be prepared for what is super-natural: and to this stupidity, by which they are unapt to enquire after, add that obstinate malignity, by which they are apt to reject and oppose the merciful discoveries and overtures of their offended reconcilable Creator and Lord: how manifestly doth this devolve the whole business of the slow

progress of the gospel in the world, upon themselves only!

As if a prince of the greatest clemency, benignity and goodness, from whom a whole country of his subjects have made a most causeless defection, hereupon sends to the whole body of the rebels, a gracious proclamation of free pardon, upon their return to their allegiance and duty; and it only from hence came to pass, that every individual distinctly understands not what the message from their prince did import, because among those that heard it, some would not allow themselves to consider and regard it, and others with despiteful violence fell upon the heralds, barbarously butchering some, and ignominiously repulsing the rest: who would not say, that the prince had fully done his part, though he should send to the rebels no further overtures? Much more, if through a long tract of time he continue the same amicable endeavours for their reduction, notwithstanding the constant experience of the same ill success, who would not cast the whole business of the continued ill understanding between him and the revolters, upon themselves; and reckon it impossible any should be ignorant of his kind and benign inclinations and intentions, if an implacable enmity and disaffection to him and his government, were not their common temper?



Though so infinitely do the mercies of God exceed those of the most merciful prince on earth, as well as his knowledge and power ; that wheresoever there are any exempt cases, we must consider him equally able and inclined to consider them distinctly. And so vastly different may we well suppose the degrees of happiness and misery to be in the other world, as that there may be latitude enough of punishing and rewarding men proportionally to the degrees of light they have had, and the more or less malignity or propension to reconciliation that was found in them.

Nor was it at all incongruous or unbecoming, that the blessed God, this being the common temper and disposition of all men to reject his gracious tenders, should provide by some extraordinary means that they might not be finally rejected by all. For what can be more appropriate to sovereignty, even where it is infinitely less absolute, than arbitrarily to design the objects of special favour ? Who blames a prince for placing the special marks of his royal bounty or clemency here and there, as he thinks fit ? or that he hath some peculiar favourites with whom he familiarly converses, whom he hath won by some or other not common inducements, and assured their loyal affection : though there be thousands of persons in his dominions of as good parts, dispositions and deserts as they ? It belongs to sover-

eighty, as such, to be favourable to some, yet so as to be just towards all.

Yea and it must be acknowledged, such are the dispensations of the holy God towards all mankind, as import not only strict righteousness, but great clemency and mercy also.

Though they might easily understand themselves to be offenders and liable to the severity of his justice, they are spared by his patience, sustained by his bounty, protected by his power; their lives and properties are fenced by his laws; and whereas they are become very dangerous enemies to one another, and each one his own greatest enemy, it is provided by those laws, even for the worst of men, that none shall injure them, that all love them, and seek their good. He interposes his authority on their behalf; and, if any wrong them, he takes it for an affront done to himself. By the same laws, they are directed to industry, frugality, sobriety, temperance, to exercise a government over themselves, to bridle and subdue their own exorbitant lusts and passions, their more immediate tormentors, and the sources of all the calamities and miseries which befall them in this world. By all which evidences of his great care and concern for their welfare, they might understand him to have favourable propensions towards them, and that though they have offended him, he is not their implacable

enemy ; and might, by his goodness, be led to repentance.

Yea, and moreover he hath sent them a Redeemer, his own Son, an incarnate Deity, who came down into this world full of grace and truth, upon the most merciful errand. He being filled with the glorious fulness of the godhead, hath been a voluntary sacrifice for the sins of men ; and if they would believe and obey him, they would find that sacrifice is accepted and available for them.

And though they are disabled to do so only by their own wicked inclinations, even against that also they have no cause to despair of being relieved if they would, which they might, admit the thoughts of their impotency and the exigency of their case, and did seriously implore divine help.

Now with whom these methods succeed well, there is no suspicion of insincerity : let us see what pretence there can be for it, with the rest.

That our disquisition may be here a little more strict, we shall enquire, “ what may be  
 “ supposed possible to be alledged out of God’s  
 “ word, which it can be thought not consistent  
 “ with sincerity to have inserted, in reference to  
 “ them that persist in wickedness till they finally  
 “ perish, upon the supposed foresight of so dis-  
 “ mal an issue.”

And “ what more convenient course we can think of, which sincerity as we apprehend, would have required.”

As to the former : it may, perhaps, be alledged, that he professes *to will the salvation of all men*. Not to desire the death of *him that dieth*. Yea and professes himself grieved that any perish. Now these things, compared with his public declarations and tenders, directed in an universal tenor to all men, carry that appearance and shew with them, as if he would have it believed his end was to save all ; wherewith his foresight of the perdition of so many, seems ill to agree. For how can that be seriously intended, which it is foreseen will not be brought about ? And how can it be thought to consist with sincerity, that there should be an appearance of his having such an end, to which a *serious real* intention of it doth not correspond ?

Wherefore we shall here examine, what *appearance* such expressions as those above recited can, by just interpretation, be understood to amount unto.

And then shew that there is *really* with the blessed God, what doth truly and fully correspond to that appearance. And very agreeably too with the hypothesis of his foreseeing how things will unhappily issue with very many.

And first, that we may understand the true

import of the expressions which we have mentioned, and others of like sound and meaning; we are to consider, that it were very injurious, to go about to affix a sense unto a single expression, without weighing the general design of the writings whereof it is a part.

It were quite to frustrate the use of words, when a matter is to be represented that is copious, and consists of many parts and branches which cannot be comprehended in one, or a few sentences, if we will pretend to estimate and make a judgment of the speaker's full meaning by this or that single passage only, because we have not patience or leisure to hear the rest; or perhaps have a greater disposition to cavil at his words than understand his meaning.

If a course resembling this should be taken in interpreting the edicts or laws of princes; suppose it were a proclamation of pardon to delinquent subjects; and only this or that favourable clause be fastened upon, without regard to the inserted provisos and conditions; the persons concerned might do a slight temporary wrong to the prince, but are in danger more fatally to wrong themselves.

The edicts of the great God, that are publicly extant to mankind, the universal publication whereof they partly withstand, and which they too commonly deprave and perversly misin-

terpret, where they do obtain, carry no such appearance with them, as if he had ever proposed it to himself for his end, to save all men, or any man, let them do what they please, or how destructive a course soever they take and shall finally persist in.

If that were supposed his design, his so seemingly serious counsels and exhortations were as vain as they could be thought, if it were as peremptorily determined all should perish. For what God will, by almighty power, immediately work, without the subordinate concurrence of any second cause, must be *necessary*. And it is equally vain, solicitiously to endeavour the engaging of subordinate agents to do that which *without them* is absolutely necessary, as it were to endeavour that *by them* which is absolutely impossible.

That which his declarations to men do amount unto is, in sum, thus much : That whereas they have by their defection and revolt from him made themselves liable to his justice, and very great consequent miseries ; he is willing to pardon, save, and restore them to a blessed state, upon such terms as shall be agreeable to the nature of that blessedness they are to enjoy, the purity of his own nature, and the order and dignity of his government. That is, that they seriously repent, and turn to him, love him as the

Lord their God, with all their heart, and soul, and mind, and one another as themselves, (being to make together one happy community in the participation of the same blessedness;) and also commit themselves by entire trust, subjection and devotedness to their great and merciful Redeemer, according to the measure of light wherewith he shall have been revealed and made known to them; submit to the motions and dictates of his blessed Spirit, whereby the impression of his own holy image is to be renewed in them, and a divine nature imparted to them; and carefully attend to his word as the means by which that impression should be made, and the very seed out of which that holy nature, and the entire frame of the new creature shall result and spring up in them; so as to make them apt unto obedience, and capable of the blessedness prepared for them. That if they neglect to attend to these external discoveries, and refuse the ordinary aids and assistances of his good Spirit, and offer violence to their own consciences, they are not to expect he should over-power them by a strong hand, and save them against the continuing disinclination of their own wills.

Nor, whatsoever extraordinary acts he may do upon some, to make them willing, is there any universal promise in his word, or other encouragement, upon which any may reasonably promise

themselves, that in the neglect and disuse of all ordinary means, such power shall be used with them as shall finally overcome their averse disaffected hearts.

It is true that he frequently uses much importunity with men, and enforces his laws with that earnestness, as if it were his own great interest to have them obeyed; wherein, having to do with men, he doth like a man solicitously intent upon an end which he cannot be satisfied till he attain. Yet withal he hath interspersed, every where in his word, so frequent, God-like expressions of his own greatness, all-sufficiency and independency of his creatures, as that if we attend to these his publick declarations, and the entire manifestation he hath made of himself, so as to compare one thing with another, we shall find the matter not at all dissembled, but might collect *this* to be the state of things between him and us, That he makes no overtures to us, as thinking us considerable, or as if any thing were to accrue to him from us. But that as he takes pleasure in the diffusion of his own goodness, so it is our interest to behave ourselves suitably thereunto, and according as we comply with it, and continue in it or do not, so we may expect the happy communications of it, or the experience of his just severity: that therefore, when he exhorts, obtests, intreats, beseeches, that we would obey and live, and speaks as if he



were grieved at our disobedience, and what is like to ensue to us therefrom; *these* are merciful condescensions, and the efforts of that goodness, which chooseth the fittest ways, of moving *us*, rather than that he is moved *himself* by any such passions, as we are wont to feel when we are pursuing our own designs. And that he vouchsafeth to speak in such a way as is less suitable *to himself* that it may be more suitable *to us*, and might teach us while he so far complies with us, how becoming it is that we yield answerable compliance unto him. But withal, as we have before observed, that he so apprehends the indignity done to his government by disobedience, that if any obey not, as the indulgent constitution and temper of his law and government now are, in and by the Redeemer, they must perish. And that he also hath such respect to the congruity and order of things, as that it shall not be the ordinary method of his government over reasonable creatures, to over-power them into that obedience, by which it may come to pass that they perish not. All which may be collected from his own plain words, when with so awful solemnity he professes, that *as he lives he takes no pleasure in the death of sinners, but that they may turn and live*; and adds, *turn ye, turn ye, why will you die?* That is, that their repentance, and consequent welfare, would be *more grateful to him*

than their perdition, upon their persevering in destructive ways ; but yet, that if they were not moved to repent by these his pleadings and expostulations used with them, they *should die*, and were therefore concerned to attend and hearken to such his reasonings and warnings, as the apt means to work their good ; not expecting he should take extraordinary courses with them in order to it. And that the *real* respect he had thereunto, should never induce him to use any indecorous course to bring it about ; but that he hath had a more principal respect to the rules of justice, and the order of his government, than to their concernments. And that by expressing himself aggrieved that any finally perish, we cannot understand more by it, than the calm dispassionate resentment and dislike, which most perfect purity, and goodness have, of the sinfulness and miserable ruin of his own creatures.

God's own word misrepresents him not, but gives a true account of him, if we allow ourselves to compare it with itself, one part of it with another. Nor doth any part of it, taken alone, import him so to have willed the happiness of men for any end of his, that he resolved he would by whatsoever means, certainly effect it ; as we are wont, many times, with such eagerness to pursue ends upon which we are intent, as not to consider the right or wrong, fit or unfit in our pursuit of

them ; and so let the cost of our means, not seldom, eat up our end. Nor did that belong to him or was his part, as our most benign, wise and righteous governor, to provide that we should certainly not transgress, or not suffer prejudice thereby ; but that we should not do so through his omission of any thing which it became him to do to prevent it.

It may therefore be of some use further to take notice, that a very divers consideration must be had, of the ends which shall be effected by *God's own action only*, and of those which are to be brought about in concurrence and subordination to his own, *by the intervenient action of his creatures*. Especially such of them as are intelligent, and capable of being governed by laws.

As to the former sort of these ends, we may be confident they were all most absolutely intended and can never fail of being accomplished.

For the latter it cannot be universally said so. For *these* being not entirely his ends, but partly his and partly prescribed by him, to his reasonable creatures, we are to conceive he always most absolutely intends to do, what he righteously esteems congruous should be his own part ; which he extends and limits as seems good unto him. And sometimes, of his own good pleasure, assumes to himself the doing of so much as shall

ascertain the end ; effectually procuring, that his creature shall do his part also : that is, not only enacts his law, and adds exhortations, warnings, promises to enforce it, but also emits that effectual influence whereby the inferior wheels shall be put into motion, the powers and faculties of his governed creature excited and assisted, and by a spirit in the wheels, made as the chariots of a willing people. At other times, and in other instances, he doth less, and meeting with resistance, sooner retires ; follows not his external edicts and declarations with so potent and determinative an influence, but that the creature, through his own great default, may omit to do his part, and so the end be not effected.

That the course of his œconomy towards men on earth is, *de facto*, ordered with this diversity, seems out of question. Manifest experience shews it. Some do sensibly perceive that motive influence which others do not. The same persons, sometimes, find not that, which at other times they do. His own word plainly asserts it. *He works in us to will and to do, of his own good pleasure. Where he will, he (in this respect) shews mercy ; where he will, he hardeneth,* or doth not prevent but that men be hardened. And indeed, we should be constrained to rase out a great part of the sacred volume, if we should not admit it to be so.

And as the equity and fitness of his making such difference, when it appears he doth make it, cannot without profaneness be doubted, so it is evident, from what we have before observed, that he forsakes none, but being first forsaken.

Nor have men any pretence to complain of subdolous dealing, or that they are surprisingly disappointed, and deprived of such help as they might have expected; inasmuch as this is so plainly extant in God's open declarations to the world, that he uses a certain arbitrariness, especially in the more exuberant dispensations of his grace; which besides other purposes, may be in order to warn men that they neglect not lower assistances; and that because he *works to will and to do of his own pleasure*, that they may be stirred up to *work out their own salvation with fear and trembling*. Whereupon elsewhere, after the most persuasive alluring invitations, *Turn ye at my reproof. I will pour out my Spirit upon you, I will make known my words to you*; it is presently subjoined, *because I called and ye refused, I stretched out my hand and no man regarded; but ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof; I also will laugh at your calamity, I will mock when your fear cometh*.

From all which it is plainly to be understood,

that the general strain and drift of God's external revelation of his mind to man in his word, and the aspect of even those passages that can with most colour be thought to signify any thing further, do amount to nothing more than this, that he doth so far *really* will the salvation of all, as not to omit the doing that which may effect it, if they be not neglectful of themselves; but not so as to use that extraordinary exertion of power, which he thinks fit to employ upon some.

Nor is it reasonably to be doubted, whether there be such a will in God or no; and so somewhat really corresponding to the aspect and appearance hereof, which is offered to our view. For what should be the reason of the doubt? He who best understands his own nature having said of himself what imports no less; why should we make a difficulty to believe him? nor indeed can any notices we have of the perfections of the divine nature be less liable to doubt, than what we have of *his unchangeable veracity*; whence as it is impossible for him to lye, it must be necessary that he be *really willing* of what he hath represented himself so to be.

I must here profess my dislike of the terms of that common distinction the *voluntas beneplaciti, et signi* or of a *secret* and *revealed* will, in this present case. Under which, such as coined and those that have much used it, have only rather,

I doubt not, concealed a good meaning, than expressed by it an ill one. It seems, I confess, by its more obvious aspect, too much to countenance the ignominious slander which profane and atheistical dispositions would fasten upon God, and the course of his procedure towards men; as though he only intended to *seem willing* of what he really was not; or that there was an appearance to which nothing did correspond; or as if the evil actions of men were more truly the objects of his good pleasure, than their forbearance of them: the absurdity and impiety, of all which it is the design of these papers to evince.

The truth is, unto which we must esteem ourselves obliged to adhere, both by our assent and defence, that God doth *really* and *complacently* will, and therefore doth with most unexceptionable sincerity declare himself to will that *to be done and enjoyed by many men,* which he doth not, universally, will *to make them do,* or *irresistibly procure that they should enjoy.* Which is no harder assertion, than that the impure will of degenerate man is opposite to the holy will of God; and the malignity of man's will to the benignity of his. No harder than that there is sin and misery in the world, which how can we conceive otherwise than as a repugnancy to the good and acceptable will of God.

Methinks it should not be difficult to us to acknowledge, that God doth *truly*, and with *complacency*, will, whatsoever is the holy righteous matter of his own laws. And if it should be with any a difficulty, I would only make this supposition: What if all the world were yet in innocency, yielding entire, universal obedience to all the now extant laws of God which have not reference to man as fallen; as those of repentance, faith in a Mediator, &c. Would it now be a doubt with any, whether God did truly and really *will*, and were *pleased with* the holiness and righteousness which were every where to be found in the world? Surely we could not, in this case, imagine the creatures will more pure and holy than the divine; or that he were displeased with men for their being righteous and holy. Now again suppose the world revolted, what then is that holy will of God changed? shall we not say it remains the same holy will still; and stands the same rule of righteousness and duty that it was? Doth the change of his rebel creatures infer any with him: Or do only the declarations of his former will remain to be their rule, and keep them still obliged, *his will itself* being become another from what it was? Surely he might as easily have changed his laws.

And if we say his will is changed, how should we know it to be so? If we know it not, surely



such a thing should not be said or thought. If we know it, how should those yet extant laws and declarations continue to oblige, against the law-giver's known will? And then the easy expedient to nullify the obligation of a law that was thought too restrictive, were to disobey it. And men might, by sinning once, licence themselves to do the same thing always, though then we could not call it sinning. And so the creature's should be the supreme, and ruling will. Nor had it been a false suggestion, but a real truth, that man, by becoming a sinner, might make himself a God.

Or if it shall be thought fit to say, that the divine will would not in that supposed case be changed; but only that now, the event makes it appear not to have been what we thought it was: That were to impute both impunity and dissimulation to the holy blessed God, as his fixed attributes. And what we thought unfit, and should abhor to imagine might have place with him one moment, to affix to him unalterably.

And whereas it may be thought to follow hence, that hereby we ascribe to God a liableness to frustration and disappointment: *That* is without reason. The resolve of the divine will in this matter, being not concerning the event what man *shall* do, but concerning his duty what he *should*, and concerning the connection between his duty

and his happiness; which we say, he doth not only seem to will, but wills it really and truly. Nor would his prescience of the event, which we all this while assert, allow frustration to be so much as possible to him; especially it being at the same time foreseen, that his will though crossed in this, would be fulfilled in so important a thing as the preserving the decorum of his own government, which had been most apparently blemished beyond what could consist with the perfections of the deity, if either his will concerning man's duty, or the declarations of that will, had not been substantially the same that they are.

We are therefore, in assigning the object of this or that act of the divine will, to do it entirely, and to take the whole object together without dividing it, as if the will of God did wholly terminate upon what indeed is but a part, and especially if that be but a less considerable part, of the thing willed. In the present case, we are not to conceive that God wills only either man's duty or felicity, or that herein his will doth solely and ultimately terminate. But the determination of God's will is, that man should be duly governed, that is congruously, both to himself and him. That such things, most congruous to both, shall be man's duty, by his doing whereof, the dignity of the divine government might be pre-

served, which was the thing principally to be designed ; and as what was secondary thereto, that hereby man's felicity should be provided for. Therefore, it being foreseen a violation would be done to the sacred rights of the divine government by man's disobedience, it was resolved they should be repaired and maintained by other means. So that the will of God hath its effect, as to what was its more noble and principal design, the other part failing only by the default of man.

And if yet it should be insisted, that in asserting God to will what by his laws he hath made man's duty, even where it is not done, we shall herein ascribe to him at least an *ineffectual* and *imperfect will*, as not bringing to pass the thing willed.

It is answered, that imperfection were with no pretence imputable to the divine will, merely for its not effecting every thing whereto it may have a *real* propension. But it would be more liable to that imputation, if it should effect any thing which it were *less fit* for him to effect, than the contrary. The absolute perfection of his will stands in the *proportion* which every act of it bears to the importance of the things about which it is conversant : even as with men the perfection of any act of will is to be estimated, not by the mere peremptory sturdiness of it, but by its proportion to the goodness of the thing willed.

Upon which account a mere *velleity*, as many love to speak, when the degree of goodness in the object claims no more, hath inconceivably greater perfection in it, than the most obstinate volition.

The will of God is entirely exempt from all imperfection, if there is sufficient reason for all the propensions, and determinations of it, whether from the value of the things willed, or from his own sovereignty who wills them.

In the present case we need not doubt to affirm, that the obedience and felicity of all men is of high consideration, and regarded by the Almighty with answerable complacency; and that his not procuring to all by a determinative will that they shall obey and be happy, arises not from a defect of benevolence, but from a due regard to his own character and government.

And since the publick declarations of his good will towards all men, import no more than his real complacency in their obedience and happiness, and do plainly import so much; their correspondency to the matter declared is sufficiently apparent. And so is the congruity of both with his prescience of the event.

For though when God urges and incites men by exhortations, promises, and threats, to the doing of their own part, which it is most agreeable to his holy gracious nature to do, he foresees ma-

ny will not be moved thereby, but persist in wilful neglect and rebellion till they perish; he at the same time, sees that they *might do otherwise*, and that if they would comply with his methods, things would otherwise issue with them. His prescience no way imposing upon them a necessity to transgress. And he had, as it was necessary he should have, not only *this* for the object of his foreknowledge, *that they would do amiss and perish*; but the whole case in its circumstances, *that they would do so, not through his omission, but their own*. And there had been no place left for this state of the case, if his publick edicts and declarations had not gone forth, in the tenour they have done.

So that the consideration of his prescience, being taken in, gives us, on the whole, this state of the case: That he foresaw men would not take that course, which he *truly* declared himself willing they should, and was graciously ready to assist them in, in order to their own well-being. Whence all complaint of insincere dealing is left without pretence.

Nor (as we also undertook to shew) could any other course, within our prospect, have been taken, that was fit in itself, and more agreeable to sincerity.

There are only these two ways besides that we can imagine: Either that God should wholly have

forborn to make overtures to men in common : Or that he should efficaciously have overpowered all into a compliance with them. And there is little doubt, but upon sober consideration, both of these will be judged altogether unfit.

The former : inasmuch as it had been most disagreeable to the exact measures of his government, to let a race of sinful creatures persist, through many successive ages, in apostacy and rebellion, when the characters of that law first written in man's heart, were in so great measure worn out, and become illegible ; without renewing the impression in another way, and reasserting his right and authority, as their Ruler and Lord. It would also have been unsuitable to the holiness of his nature, not to send into the world such a declaration of his will, as might be a standing testimony against the impurity whereinto it was lapsed ; and to his goodness, not to make known upon what terms, and for whose sake, he was reconcileable. Nay it had been more liable to the charge of insincerity, to have concealed from men what was real truth, and of so much concernment to them. And he did, in revealing it, but act agreeable to his nature ; the goodness whereof is no more lessened, by men's refusal of its offers, than his truth can be made of none effect by their disbelief of its assertions. Besides the great use such an extant revelation of the way of

recovery was to be of to those that should obediently comply with it.

And the latter we may also apprehend very unfit too ; though, because that is less obvious, it requires to be more largely insisted upon.

For it would seem, that if we do not effect any thing which we have a real will unto, it must proceed from impotency, and that we *cannot do it* ; which who would say of the great God ?

Herein, therefore, we shall proceed by steps ; and gradually offer the things that follow to consideration.

It would indeed be repugnant to the notion of a Deity, to suppose any thing, which includes in it no contradiction, impossible to Him, considered only according to the single attribute of *power*.

But this were a very unequal way of estimating what God can do, to consider his power only. For the notion of God so conceived, were very inadequate, since when taken entirely, it imports the comprehension of all perfections. So that they are two very distant questions, *what the power of God alone could do* ; and, *what God can do*. And whereas to the former the answer would be, *Whatsoever is not in itself repugnant to be done* : To the latter it must only be, *whatsoever it becomes, or is agreeable to a being every way perfect to do*. And so it is to be attributed

to the excellency of his nature, if amongst all things not simply impossible, there be any which it may be truly said *he cannot do*. Or, it proceeds not from the imperfection of his power, but from the concurrence of all other perfections in him. Hence his own Word plainly affirms of him, *that he cannot lye*. And by common consent it will be acknowledged, that he cannot do any unjust act whatsoever.

To this I doubt not we may with as common suffrage, when the matter is considered, subjoin, that his *wisdom* doth as much limit the exercise of his power, as his *righteousness* or his *truth* doth. And that it may with as much confidence and clearness be said and understood, that he cannot do an *unwise* or *imprudent* act, as an *unjust*.

Further, as his *righteousness* corresponds to the *justice of things*, to be done or not to be done, in like manner doth his *wisdom* to the *congruity* or *fitness*. So that he cannot do what it is *unfit* for him to do, because he is most perfectly and infinitely wise.

Again, this rule must be understood to have a very large and most general extent unto all the affairs of his government. We in our observations, may take notice, that fewer questions can occur concerning what is *right* or *wrong*, than what is *fit* or *unfit*. And whereas any man may



in a moment be honest if he have a mind to it; very few, even after long experience, attain to be wise; the things about which *justice* is conversant being reducible to certain rules, but *wisdom* supposes very general knowledge of things scarce capable of such reduction; and is besides the primary requisite in any one that bears rule over others; it must therefore most eminently influence all the managements of the supreme ruler. It is moreover to be considered, that innumerable congruities lie open to infinite wisdom which are never obvious to our view or thought: as to a well-studied scholar, thousands of coherent notions, which an illiterate person never thought of; to a practised courtier, or well educated gentleman, many decencies and indecencies, in the matter of civil behaviour and conversation, which an unbred rustic knows nothing of; and to an experienced statesman, such publick considerations as never occur to the thoughts of him who daily follows the plough.

What government is there that hath not its *arcana*, profound mysteries and reasons of state that a vulgar wit cannot dive into? whence the account to be given, why this or that is done or not done, is not always that it would have been *unjust* it should be otherwise, but it had been imprudent. And many things are hereupon judg'd

necessary, not from the *exigency of justice*, but *reason of state*. Therefore men of modest and sober minds, that have had experience of the wisdom of their governors and their happy conduct, through a considerable tract of time, when they see things done by them, the leading reasons whereof they do not understand, and the effect and success comes not yet in view, suspend their censure; yea though the course that is taken have, to their apprehension, an ill aspect; accounting it becomes them not to make a judgment of things so far above their reach, and confiding in the tried wisdom of their rulers, who, they believe, see reasons for what they do, into which they find themselves unable to penetrate.

With how much more submissive and humble veneration ought the methods of the divine government to be beheld and adored, upon the certain assurance we have, that all things herein are managed by that wisdom which could never in any thing mistake its way. Whereas there was never any administration of human government so accurate and exact, but that after a tract of time, it was justly chargeable with some errors.

Again, it may further be said, without presuming beyond due bounds, that though infinite congruities must be supposed to lye open to the

divine understanding which are concealed from ours, yet that these two things in the general are very manifestly congruous to any sober attentive mind, viz.

That the course of God's government over the world, be, for the most part steady and uniform; not interrupted by very frequent, extraordinary, and anomalous actions; and again, that he sometimes use a royal liberty of stepping out of his usual course as he sees meet.

For, as to the former point; what confusion would it make in the world, if there should be perpetual innovations? In the sphere of nature, the virtues and proper qualities of things being never certain, could never be understood or known. In that of policy, no measures, so much as probable, could ever be taken. How much better is it in both, that second causes ordinarily follow their proper tendencies? And why is it not to be thought congruous, that, in some degree, things should be proportionably so in the sphere of grace?

We pray when our friends are sick, for their recovery. What can be the sober meaning and design of such prayers? Not that God would work a miracle in their favour; for then we might as well pray for their revival after death; but that God would be pleased so to co-operate

in the still and silent way of nature with second causes, and so bless means, that they may be recovered if he see good. Otherwise that they may be prepared to undergo his pleasure. And agreeable hereto ought to be the intent of our prayers in reference to public affairs and better posture of the world.

And we may take notice that divine wisdom lays a very great stress upon this matter, viz. *the preserving of the common order of things*; and there appears in this respect a certain inflexibility of providence not easily diverted from its wonted course. At this weak minds are apt to take offence, and to wonder perhaps, that against so many prayers and tears God will let a good man die, or one whom they love; or that a miracle is not wrought to prevent their own being wronged at any time; or, that some judgment doth not light upon him that hath done them wrong: but a judicious person would consider, if it be so highly reasonable that my desires should be complied with so extraordinarily, then why not all mens? And thus the world would be filled with prodigies and confusion.

And for the other point, it were no less incongruous, if the supreme power should so tie its own hands, and be so bound to *rules* and *methods*, as never to do any thing extraordinary, though

upon the most important occasions. How ill could the world have wanted such an effort of omnipotency, as the restriction upon the flames from destroying Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego? Or the miracles wrought in our Saviour's and the apostles' times? Such things are never done but when the all-comprehending wisdom sees it *most congruous*; and that the cause will over recompence the deflection from the common course. Besides, if no such thing did ever fall out, what a temptation were it to mankind to introduce into their belief an unintelligent fate instead of a deity?

Now there is the like congruity upon as valuable, though not altogether the same reasons, that in the affairs of grace there be somewhat *correspondent*. That generally it be sought and expected in the use of ordinary means; and that, sometimes, its sovereignty shew itself in preventing exertions, and in working so heroically, as none have before-hand, in the neglect of its ordinary methods, any reason to expect.

And we may fitly add, that where sovereignty is pleased thus to exercise itself, it is sufficient that there be a *general congruity* that it do so sometimes; but that there should be a particular leading congruity or antecedent reason, to invite these extraordinary operations of grace to one person more than another, is not necessary: but

it is most congruous, that, herein it be most arbitrary ; as being most agreeable to the supremacy of God, to the state of sinful man, who hath infinitely disobliged him and can deserve nothing from him, yea, and even to the nature of the thing. For, where there is a parity in any objects of our own choice, there can be no leading reason to this rather than that. The most prudent man, that is wont to guide himself by never so exquisite wisdom, where there is a perfect indifferency between doing this thing or that, is not liable to censure that he is not able to give a reason why he did *that*, not *the other*. Wisdom hath no exercise in that case.

But that the blessed God doth ordinarily proceed in these affairs by a steady rule, and sometimes shew his liberty of departing from it, is to be resolved into his infinite wisdom. Whereupon the great apostle Saint Paul discoursing upon this subject, doth not resolve the matter into strict justice nor absolute sovereignty, but we find him in a transport in the contemplation of the *divine wisdom* that herein so eminently shines forth. *O the depths of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!*

To sum up all: We conclude it obvious to the apprehension of every thinking man that it was most congruous the general course of God's government should be by moral instruments; and

though it were very unreasonable to imagine, that God cannot in any case extraordinarily over-  
 sway the inclinations, and determine the will of  
 such a creature as man in a way perfectly agreea-  
 ble to his nature, and highly reasonable to admit  
 that in many cases he doth ; yet we judge it ma-  
 nifest from what hath been advanced, that it were  
 very incongruous this should be the ordinary  
 course of his conduct towards mankind, That a  
 whole order of intelligent creatures should be  
 moved chiefly by inward impulses ; that God's  
 precepts, promises and comminations, whereof  
 their nature is capable, should be made imperti-  
 nencies, through his constant overpowering those  
 that should neglect them ; that the faculties  
 whereby men are capable of moral government,  
 should be rendered to this purpose useless and  
 vain ; and that they should be tempted to expect  
 to be constantly managed as mere machines, that  
 know not their own use.

Nor is it less apprehensible how incongru-  
 ous it were also on the other hand, to suppose  
 that the exterior frame of God's government  
 should be totally unaccompanied with an internal  
 vital energy ; or exclude the inward motions,  
 operations and influences, whereof such a creature  
 is fitly capable : or that God should have barred  
 out himself from all inward access to the spirits  
 of men, or commerce with them.

It is manifestly congruous that the divine government over man should be as it is, mixed or composed of an external frame of laws with their sanctions and inforcements, and an internal effusion of power and vital influence, correspondent to the several parts of that frame, which might animate the whole, and use it as instrumental, to the begetting of correspondent impressions on men's spirits : and that this power be put forth, not like that of a natural agent, *ad ultimum*, which if we would suppose the divine power to be, new worlds must be springing up every moment ; but *gradually*, and with an apt contemperation to the subject upon which it is designed to have its operation ; and withal *arbitrarily*, as is becoming the great agent from whom it proceeds, and to whom it therefore belongs, to measure its exertions as seems meet unto him : That it be *constantly* put forth, though most gratuitously, (especially the disobligation of the apostacy being considered,) upon all to that degree as that they be enabled to do much good to which they are not impelled by it : that it be ever ready, since it is the power of grace, to go forth in a further degree than it had yet done, wherever any former issues of it have been duly complied with ; though it be so little supposeable that man should hereby have obliged God thereto, that God hath not any way obliged himself ; otherwise, than



that he hath implied a readiness to impart unto man what shall be necessary to enable him to obey, so far as, upon the apostacy, is requisite to his relief, if he seriously endeavour to do his own part by the power he hath already received ; agreeable to the common saying, *homini facienti quod in se est*, &c. Finally, that according to the royal liberty wherewith it works, it go forth, as to some with that efficacy, as notwithstanding whatever resistance, yet to overcome, and make them captives to the authority and love of Christ.

And if God's placing us in such a state, tended to render his government over this world more august and awful for the present, and the result and final issue more glorious and consequently more congruous ; then, man's rectitude and happiness could not be so absolutely willed, as to be infallibly and necessarily secured.

Moreover, it is finally to be considered, that the methods of the divine government are to be exposed to the view and judgment of intellects superior to our own, and we expect they will to our own in another state. What conception thereof is already received and formed in our minds is but an embryo, no less imperfect than our present state is.

It were very unreasonable to expect, since this world shall continue but a little while, that all God's managements and ways of procedure in ordering the great affairs of it, should be attempered and fitted to the judgment that shall be made of them in this temporary state that will so soon be over; and to the present apprehension and capacity of our dark and distempered minds. A vast and stable eternity remains, wherein the whole celestial *chorus* shall entertain themselves with the grateful contemplation and applause of his deep counsels. Such things as now seem perplexed and intricate to us, will appear most irreprehensibly fair and comely to angelical minds and our own, when we shall be vouchsafed a place amongst that happy community. And we must wait for that perfect state, where the glorious excellencies and perfections of the divine nature with their various exhibitions in the works of nature and grace, will be beheld with everlasting and most complacential approbation.

Therefore, though now we should covet the clearest and most satisfying account of things that can be had, we are yet to exercise patience, and not to precipitate our judgment of them before the time: as knowing our present con-

ceptions will differ more from what they will be hereafter, than those of a child from the maturer thoughts of the wisest man; and that many of our conceits which we thought wise, we shall *then* see cause to put away as childish things.

## EXTRACT

FROM

*Bishop Stillingfleet.*

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(SEE THE SECOND PREFACE.)\*

**G**OD forbid that we should go about to lessen any thing of the design of Christ's suffering for us, on which our salvation so much depends. But the present question only relates to the manner of his doing it, whether as a Surety for our debts or no. Some will say, what harm is there in this easy similitude, which people may apprehend without trouble? But it may be not without danger, for they can as easily draw consequences from it too: viz. "That Christ hath then fully dis-

\* In this, and the following Extract, (as in the preceding ones,) the Editor has sometimes taken the liberty, to change a scholastic term, or an involved sentence, for others more generally intelligible.

charged our debts already, and they can no more be charged upon us, than a creditor can demand a sum of money from a debtor which was fully paid to a farthing by his Surety; and therefore all that we have to do is to believe and to be thankful; for all this transaction was long since past without the consideration of any act on our parts, and they must be great enemies to the privileges of believers that can now talk of conditions on our parts, for this is no less than bringing us back to a covenant of works, and making void the covenant of grace." These are consequences of a very high nature, and have no foundation but this supposition, that all our sins as debts are transferred upon Christ as our Surety; and that he hath actually discharged the whole debt which therefore cannot be upon those whom he suffered for: and consequently we cannot suffer for those sins which are already discharged, nor do any thing in order to our justification and salvation, whatever the scripture seems to express to the contrary.

Dr. Crisp looked as far into this matter as any one since, and it may be more; he turned the scriptures over and over, and examined them with great care to find out what served his purpose; for his heart seemed to be set upon it; and as his son saith, it ran in his head when he was.

dying; and speaking of those who disputed against his notions of free grace, he said, "Where are they? I am now ready to answer them all;" which shewed the earnestness of his zeal about them. Yet there is but one place of scripture which he could find that seemed to favour his sense, and that is Heb. 7. 22. where Christ is said to be *the Surety of a better testament* (or covenant.) "God," saith he, "takes Christ for a Surety, as men will do, so doth God with Christ."—"Man is a broken debtor, and Christ is a Surety, one that is rich and able to pay, and therefore God will look after none but him; for this cause Christ gives his own single bond, and God is content to take Christ's single bond and looks for no other pay-master but Christ."

What strange deductions are here made from one word, quite beside the intention and scope of the apostle, who doth not speak of a Surety for debt, but of the Surety of a covenant; not of one that was to pay our debts to God, but of such a Surety as was to give us satisfaction, by his unchangeable priesthood, of the performance of those promises which God made to us in this better covenant.

I find some charged with talking much of a suretyship, righteousness, and of an equality of

believers with Christ in respect to it; which is another strange consequence from Christ's being our Surety as to the payment of our debts, because the debtor may be said to pay that sum which the Surety lays down for him; and that God doth account that believers have paid that debt of obedience which Christ hath paid in their stead, because they are one legal person with Christ. All this arises from this mistaken notion of suretyship. But if it be once supposed that we perfectly obeyed the law in Christ, there can be no room for remission of sins; for how can sins be forgiven to those who have perfectly obeyed the law? Or how can they be said to obey the law perfectly in Christ, whose sins being laid on Christ do shew that they have not obeyed it? The argument doth not hold, that because a debt may be transferred to a surety, and the debtor discharged, that therefore our sins may be transferred to Christ and we receive a discharge by his becoming our surety. For, though there is no difficulty in conceiving the transfer of debts and discharge of a debtor thereby, yet guilt cannot be transferred as money may, the guilt of the fact remains a personal thing; and although the sinner be said to owe a debt to the law, yet that debt lies in the obligation to punishment, which he is liable to by the guilt of the fact; and although the punishment

may be transferred by the Legislator's consent, yet the personal fault cannot. If it be asked, doth not this debt arise from the guilt of the fact, how then can any discharge the debt without taking the fault? I answer, that taking the fault can signify no more than being answerable to the law for it, which must respect the debt of punishment inflicted by the law, and he that takes away the obligation to punishment doth satisfy the justice of the law. But we are told, that nothing is a demerit of punishment but *reatus culpæ*, and therefore if Christ did undergo the punishment of our sins, he must have borne the guilt of our sins as to fault. Answer: In the guilt as to the fault, there are two distinct considerations, 1. The fault itself, or the actual violation of the law by him that committed it, and this can never be transferred. 2. The debt to the law which follows the fact, and this respects the punishment, which may be transferred. It is true indeed, that in the natural and ordinary course of things, punishment doth attach to the sinner himself; but laws and punishments being made for wise ends, the Legislator himself may interpose, and for good reasons may change the ordinary course of justice, and accept of another person to suffer instead of the offender.

But suppose the *fault* could be transferred



as a debt may, how doth it follow, that upon this translation there must be a present discharge, as there is upon the Surety's being accepted instead of the debtor? In the case of a debt there is nothing looked after but payment of the money; but in the remission of sins there are very weighty considerations as to the manner of discharging the obligation to punishment. For the honour of God, of religion, and the real interests of men's souls, are deeply concerned in this matter. It is very possible for men to frame a scheme of religion to themselves from some peculiar phrases of scripture and general promises, which may be fitted to some particular uses, so as to give satisfaction to some person's doubts; (which seems to have been Dr Crisp's intention,) but which considering the whole design of the gospel may be of dangerous consequence to mankind, who are too apt to make ill use of such principles, by drawing deductions from them which tend to encourage them in the neglect or careless performance of that strict obedience they owe to God with respect to himself, and to their neighbours. And it is of little moment to them to be told, that God will carry on his own work of grace in those whom he intends to bring to salvation; for this naturally disposes men's minds to a passive careless temper, as though they had nothing to do but to wait for supplies from above, and to depend upon God's

working in them *to will and to do of his good pleasure*, without setting themselves to *work out their own salvation with fear and trembling*. And yet St. Paul, who certainly understood the power and design of God's free grace, uses one as the strongest argument for the other. What would he have said to such men, who according to these principles, must have told him that he discharged the freeness of God's grace by putting men upon working out their own salvation, "for this was to bring in a covenant of works again, and a bargain and sale with God, and to set up the merit of man's works to salvation; for every condition gives a right, and what gives a right may be challenged as due, and what may be challenged as due is meritorious."

If there be any thing in such kind of arguments, St. Paul was as much concerned to have answered them as any now can be; but he thought much lay upon men to do notwithstanding that wonderful grace of God in the manner of our salvation by Christ, and that *by patient continuance in well doing men ought to seek for glory and honour and immortality*,\* which they could not do unless they had a regard to well doing in such seeking, as the way to attain. Doth he not bid christians *to run that they may obtain*? Doth

\* Rom, ii. 7.

not this make running a condition of obtaining? And what is obtaining but salvation? What doth he mean by his *pressing towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*? Do not these expressions imply a great care to obtain the reward of another life? Here is something beyond mere gratitude and service; for he doth suppose a connection in a way of duty, and means in order to the end, and not mere connection in a way of event, so as that to those to whom God will give glory he will give grace to fit them for it. But St. Paul intimates far more when he saith that he kept his body in subjection; for what reason? was it merely to testify his thankfulness? he gives another account of it, *lest that by any means while I preach to others, I myself become a cast-away*. Was then St. Paul so ignorant of the sureness of the gospel covenant as to suppose that by any act of his he could make void that covenant which hath no relation to conditions on our part? Either he was so ignorant, or others must be extremely mistaken who can hardly think he speaks tolerable sense, if he doth indeed intend to exclude conditions on our part in order to salvation: But as no man magnifies the riches and freeness of grace more than St. Paul, so no one presses the necessity of holiness more, as that, *without which no man shall see the Lord*. Is this only to tell them, “That God will make them

holy, if he designs to make them happy?" No, but he puts them upon pursuing after holiness, for this reason; *If ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye through the spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*\* Is not this acting for life and not merely from it? He supposes the Spirit ready to assist them in duty, and the greatest encouragement to the performance of it. In general he persuades christians to sincerity and diligence from this consideration: *knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance for ye serve the Lord Christ. But he that doth wrong shall receive for the wrong that he hath done; and there is no respect of persons.*† Could any man more plainly enforce duty with respect to rewards and punishments according to its performance or non-performance than St. Paul here doth? And he inforces it from this consideration *that there is no respect of persons*, which in this place must imply, that God will have regard to men's actions and not to their privileges.

Some will perhaps say, "What is this, but to make the promise to secure life upon doing our duty? And if this be not to make the gospel a more overgrown and swingeing covenant of works than ever the old law was, they have lost all their

\* Rom. viii. 13.

† Col. iii. 23—25.

theological measures." I know not from whence such men take their *theological measures*, nor of what kind they are, nor by what standard they are to be tried; but I know of no infallible standard but the scriptures, and therefore all theological measures are to be examined by them. And I think St. Paul may as little be suspected of setting up a covenant of works as any penman of the New Testament, and it is from him I have chosen to produce my testimonies, because it is he that attributes so much to the grace of God in order to our salvation. It is he that hath said, *God hath called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world begun.\** It is he that hath said, *Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost, which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour.†* It is he also that requires men *to work out* their salvation with fear and trembling. St. Paul useth the same word, Rom. vii. 18. where it signifies bringing a thing to effect, and is opposed to mere *willing*; we render it *to perform*; in the LXX it is used for finishing and carrying on a thing

\* 2 Tim. i. 19.

† Titus iii. 5.

already begun, and can imply no less than great diligence in doing all such things as tend to our salvation ; for that is the thing we are to work out by divine assistance ; and therefore our own working is required by the Author of our salvation, though he saves us not for the sake of any works of righteousness which we can do, yet his way of saving us is by our working out our own salvation. But some tell us, no more is meant by this but “ a continual maintaining a holy jealousy of ourselves, lest we should fail of the grace of God by trusting in ourselves ; for it is immediately added, it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do.” And is this all that St. Paul means ? By *fear* and *trembling* indeed that humility of mind may be understood which carries with it a jealousy of ourselves ; but what is working out our salvation ? Is that “ not trusting in ourselves,” but depending on God to do it for us ? But is there then nothing we are to do with that divine assistance promised ? Are we to sit still, and only expect when God will work in us to will and to do ? Then working out our own salvation are insignificant words, and imply doing nothing ; which is such a sense of the words as was never thought of before, and will not be again by any that do think of what they write.

But St. Paul himself gives another sense when he persuades rich men *that they do good,*

*that they be rich in good works, laying up in store for themselves a good foundation against the time to come, that they may take hold of eternal life.\**

How is this? What, do good works that they may take hold of eternal life? What is this but “a swingeing covenant of works” of St. Paul’s setting up? What is become now of the “theological measures?” Did St. Paul forget himself? or did he, *who became all things to all men*, deal with rich men in their own way of bargain and sale? But surely he would never so accommodate himself as to overthrow the covenant of grace; and these men imagine such conditions would do it. He very well understood the difference between the foundation of the covenant itself, which was certainly nothing but the grace and mercy of God through Jesus Christ, and the foundation of our hopes of obtaining the benefits of it, which supposes the performance of such conditions as are required from us, not as works meritorious of a reward, but as means which God hath appointed in order to an end. Suppose a son hath an estate promised him of the free gift of his father, who yet requires some conditions to be performed by him before he comes to the possession it, can any one think this a bargain and sale between father and son, or that he is to purchase the estate by these conditions? If these be their

\* 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19.

theological measures they had need to seek for new ones, for these will never hold according to the standard of scripture or reason.

If there be no conditions on our part in order to our partaking of the benefit of Christ's sufferings, how can men have any good ground to satisfy themselves that the guilt of their sins is transferred upon Christ? This was a difficulty which Dr. Crisp was aware of, and therefore labours much for the clearing of it. The short of what he says is this, if men can believe it to be so, that is the best evidence that the thing is really so. These are his words, "If thou believe with all thy heart, thy sins are forgiven thee, (though the very believing itself does not infeof thee in that freedom) but if you would know whether you have any part in this freedom or not, the believing in the Lord Christ is a sufficient manifestation." Again, "If the Lord hath laid iniquity, our iniquity upon Christ, then whosoever thou art to whom the Lord will be pleased to give the believing of this truth, that the Lord hath laid thy iniquity upon him; that laying thy iniquity upon him is an absolute and full discharge to thee, that there neither is, nor can be any iniquity that for the present or for hereafter, can be laid to thy charge, let the person be who he will: If the Lord, I say again, give to any to believe this truth, that it is *his* iniquity the Lord hath



laid upon Christ, God himself cannot charge any one sin upon that person." These are very bold expressions, and ought to have had plain scripture, or evident reason to support them, but they have neither. The place of scripture he brings is, *Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?* But is believing that our sins are forgiven an infallible mark of being God's elect? Is it not possible for one not elect to believe this, or for one elect not to believe it? If so how can it be any reasonable argument to conclude that a man's sins are forgiven because he believes they are. Is presumption a thing possible or not? If it be possible, and if presumption be, believing without grounds, what ground can any one have to believe that his sins are forgiven *because* he believes it? Where hath God declared this in scripture, and what ground can there be for true faith without divine revelation?

But Dr. Crisp was aware of the objection about presumption, and he gives this answer to it "Let the person be what he will, if there be but a real receiving of Christ, there is not presumption but true believing," which is not at all to the purpose; for the question is not about receiving of Christ as to his word and promises, which is no doubt a real act of faith, nor about a firm persuasion of the mind as to the truth of what God hath revealed; but it is about that particular

act of faith whereby we believe that our sins are forgiven; and this is supposed to be the first act of saving faith, and to be the true manifestation that such a person's sins are forgiven. And this is that which leads men, we say, to presumption, and hath no ground at all in scripture. It is far from presumption to believe what God hath declared and promised, for this is our duty: It is no presumption to apply the general promises of forgiveness of sins to ourselves, for without that they cannot reach our case, and therefore cannot afford sufficient ground of inward peace and satisfaction of mind: It is no presumption to rely upon the truth of divine promises, nor to depend on our blessed Saviour for the performance of them, for this is consequent upon our persuasion that these promises are divine; but yet it may be great presumption to conclude that a man's sins are forgiven, because he believes that they are forgiven, having been laid on Christ. For on what is this connection founded? Where is it revealed? And if to believe a thing without ground be presumption, then this must be so.

But Dr. Crisp argues that scripture, *While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* "If thou art a sinner therefore, Christ died for thee." And how then? Must every sinner believe, not only that Christ died for him, but that his sins are forgiven, and if he can believe this, that it is a mark of his elec-

tion? Then here is universal redemption asserted in its full extent, and what is more, here is an universal election too, if all men can believe their sins are forgiven; at least it is a conditional election; and what can hinder any man more from repentance and forsaking his sins than to be told, that the first act of saving faith is to believe that his sins are forgiven? But the gospel preaches repentance in order to remission of sins; for when Christ sent abroad his apostles to preach to the world, the message was, *that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations.\** Not that men were to believe their sins are already forgiven, being laid upon Christ; although the sufferings of Christ be mentioned just before. And when St. Peter under the influence of the Holy Spirit spake of the sufferings of Christ, it is observable what presently follows, *Repent ye therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.†* What a different account is this from believing that your sins are forgiven, and you may be sure they are forgiven? And upon the very day of Pentecost, he said, *Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.‡*

\* Luke xxiv. 47.      † Acts iii. 19.      ‡ Acts i. 38.

Here is not only repentance required for remission of sins, but baptism too. And is not the baptismal covenant a condition on our parts? It must be a mere piece of pageantry, an insignificant ceremony, if it doth not imply a stipulation on the part of those who are baptized. And what is a stipulation but a federal condition? So that those who exclude conditions from the covenant of grace, must make nothing of the baptismal covenant as to any real obligation on the consciences of men. And how can those be accounted christians who do so? These things are so plain in scripture that I wonder how those can account it the rule of their faith who deny them; but, whatever such men pretend, they must take up their theological measures, as they call them, some other way. And it is not hard to guess what it is which recommends such doctrines to those who have a mind to reconcile the practice of gainful and fashionable sins with an interest in Christ; and it is a dangerous temptation for others to preach such pleasing opinions, especially when they are covered over with the very specious pretence of advancing the free grace of God, which must be free indeed if no conditions be required on our parts. But then methinks they might exclude a condition without as well as within them, and so

there would be no need of the satisfaction of Christ. For the absolute promises of the new covenant on which so much stress is laid, without comparing them with other places of scripture, speak no more of Christ's sufferings than they do of any conditions in us.

## EXTRACTS

FROM

*The Rev. John Howe.*

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**T**HERE hath been a twofold law given by God to mankind, as the measure and rule of an universal righteousness, the one made for innocent, the other for lapsed man. These are distinguished by the apostle under the names of the law of works, and the law of faith. It can never be possible that any of the apostate sons of Adam should be denominated righteous by the former of these laws, the righteousness thereof consisting in a perfect and sinless obedience.

The latter therefore is the only measure and rule of this righteousness, viz. the law of faith, or that part of the gospel revelation which contains and discovers our duty, what we are to be

and do in order to our blessedness ; being as to the matter of it, the moral law attempered to the state of fallen sinners by evangelical mitigations and indulgence, by the superadded precepts of repentance and faith in the Mediator, with all the other duty respecting the Mediator as such.

This rule, though in the whole of it, it be capable of coming under one common notion, *as being the standing obliging law of Christ's mediatorial kingdom*, yet according to the different matter of it, its obligations and annexed sanctions are different.

As to its matter, it must be understood to require,

1. The existence and sincerity of those gracious principles, with their essential acts, (as there is opportunity,) in opposition to the nullity and insincerity of them.

2. All the possible degrees and improvements of such principles and acts, in opposition to any the least failure or defect.

In the former respect it measures the very essence of this righteousness, and enjoins what concerns the *being* of the righteous man as such, in the latter it measures all the superadded degrees of this righteousness, enjoining what concerns the perfection of the righteous man. In the former respect, righteousness is opposed to wickedness,

as in that of the Psalmist, “ I have kept the ways of the Lord, and have not wickedly departed from my God, therefore hath the Lord recompensed me according to my righteousness.” Psal. xviii. 21—24. In the latter it is opposed to unrighteousness of any kind, as in those words of the apostle, *If we say we have no sin we deceive ourselves, &c.—If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* 1 John i. 8, 9.

Accordingly its sanctions are different. For wherein it enjoins the former of these, *i.e.* the essence of this righteousness, in opposition to a total absence thereof, it is constitutive of the terms of our salvation, and obligeth under the penalty of eternal death. So faith, repentance, love, subjection, &c. are required, John viii. 24. *If ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins.* Chap. iii. 18, 36. *He that believeth not is condemned already.—The wrath of God abideth on him.* Luke xiii. 35. *Except ye repent ye shall all likewise perish.* Acts iii. 19. *Repent, that your sins may be blotted out.* Chap. v. 31. *Him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Saviour to give repentance and remission of sins.* 1 Cor. xvi. 22. *If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be anathema maranatha.* Matt. x. 29. *He that loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me.* Luke xiv. 26. *If any man come*



*to me, and hate not his father and mother and wife and children, &c. (i. e. loves them not less than me, as the former scripture expounds this) he cannot be my disciple. Heb. v. 9. He is the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him. And, 2 Thess. i. 3, 9. He will come in flaming fire to take vengeance of those that know not God, & obey not his gospel; who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, &c.* Where it is only the sincerity of these several requisites that is under so severe penalty exacted and called for; inasmuch as he that is sincerely a believer, a penitent, a lover of God and Christ, an obedient subject, is not capable of the contrary denomination, and therefore not liable, according to the tenor of this law, to be punished as an infidel, an impenitent person, an enemy, a rebel.

But when it enjoins the latter, viz. all subsequent duty, in the whole course of which the sincere soul must be tending towards perfection, though it bind not thereto under pain of damnation, further than as neglects and miscarriages may be so gross and continued, as not to consist with sincerity; yet such injunctions are not wholly without penalty: but here it obliges under less penalties, the hidings of God's face and other paternal severities and castigations. They that thus only offend, are chastened of the Lord that they

may not be condemned with the world. 1 Cor. xi. 32. *Their iniquity is visited with the rod, and their transgression with stripes, though loving kindness be not taken away, Psal. lxxxix.* Yea and while they are short of perfect holiness, their blessedness is imperfect also, which is to be acknowledged a very grievous penalty, but inconceivably short of what befalls them who are simply unrighteous. That it obliges thus diversly is evident, for it doth not adjudge to eternal death for the least defect, for then wherein were this a relieving law? Yet doth it require perfection, or that we perfect holiness in the fear of God. 2 Cor. vii. 1. That we be perfect as our Father in heaven is perfect. Matt. v. Otherwise, did it bind to no other duty than what it makes simply necessary to salvation, the defects and miscarriages that consist with sincerity, were no sins, not being provided against by any law which is of present obligation. For to suppose the law of works in its own proper form and tenor, to be still obligatory is to suppose all under hopeless condemnation, inasmuch as all have sinned. And besides, it would oblige to cast off all regard to Christ, and to seek blessedness without him; yea and it would oblige to a natural impossibility, even to a contradiction, to make that not to have been which hath been, a sinner to seek happiness by never having sinned. It cannot therefore intirely in its own form as it was at first laid

upon man, be of present obligation to him. But in what part and respect it is, or is not, comes now more distinctly to be shewn.

With respect to the promise (implied in the threatening) it ceased.

With respect to the preceptive part, what was positive in it is plainly abrogate. As to the natural part, or those duties which essentially arise from the relation of the creature to the creator, it could not possibly be abrogated; its foundations being more stable than heaven and earth.

For the commination, we must understand two things in it, First, that for every transgression a proportionable punishment must become due. Secondly, that this debt be in event exacted, or that God do actually inflict the deserved penalty upon the offending person.

The former of these is in the strictest and most proper sense natural, and therefore also unalterable. This dueness arising immediately from the relation of a reasonable creature offending, to his maker. Whence also it is discernible by mere natural light. Pagans are said (Rom. i. 32.) *to have known the righteous judgment of God, that they who commit such things (as are there mentioned) are worthy of death.* And hence was the dread of a *Nemesis*, a vindictive deity, so frequent with them.

“ If therefore (as the learned Grotius speaks) there had never been a penal law, yet an human act, having in itself a pravity, whether intrinsic from the immutable nature of the thing, or even extrinsecal from the contrary command of God, had deserved punishment, and that very grievous.”\*

Now what an arbitrary constitution did not create, it could not nullify; but might add strength and give confirmation to it.

But now for the latter, *That this debt be exacted of the sinner himself*, though that be also natural, yet not in the strictest and most proper sense, *i. e.* it is agreeable to the nature of the thing, but not what it doth so necessarily require that it can upon no terms be dispensed with. It is as natural, as that the son inherit from his father, which yet may sometimes, for just causes be ordered otherwise. It is what, if it were done justice could not but approve: not what it doth indispensibly require. It is a debt which it might exact, but which may without injustice, upon valuable considerations, be remitted.

The former of these therefore, (the dueness of the punishment) the new constitution doth not infringe or weaken, but confirm and reinforce. The latter, (its exaction from the sinner) it so far dis-

\* De Satisf. cap. 3.

penses with, as that on account of the satisfaction made by the Redeemer, the debt incurred by sin be remitted to the sinner that truly repents and believes, and continues sincerely although imperfectly, to obey for the future.

So that his after delinquencies, (consisting with sincerity,) do not actually subject him to other penalties than the paternal rebukes and chastenings before mentioned. But *the determination of the full penalty, to the very person of the transgressor* it doth not dispense with to others, (*i. e.* of the adult, and of persons in a present natural possibility of understanding the lawgiver's pleasure,) but says expressly, *He that believeth not the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abideth on him:\** That indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, shall be upon every soul of man that doth evil.†

Therefore the morally preceptive part of the law of works is not in force as man's rule of duty considered in conjunction with the promise; that is, it doth not now say to any man, *do this* (*i. e.* perfectly obey without ever having sinned,) *that thou mayest live*. But it is in force as God's rule of judgment (even by the new constitution itself) considered in conjunction with the commination, upon all whom the law of grace relieves not, as fal-

\* John iii. 36. . . . † Rom. ii. 8, 9. . . .

ling short of its terms ; whom also this supervening law brings under a supervening aggravated condemnation. We see then how far the law of works is in force and how far not.

But, that so far as it is in force it must be looked on as taken into the new constitution of the law of grace, is evident. For it is new modified and hath received a new stamp and mould by this law, which is now become (wherever promulgated) the standing rule of government over the lapsed world. The principal modifying act herein, is *dispensation*. Now this, 'tis true, may be taken in such a sense wherein it will belong only to the executive part of government as distinguished from the legislative ; where the execution of the deserved penalty is dispensed with by a judge who is only a minister of the law, and not the maker of it ; being enabled thereto by the law itself, or, by an authority annexed to his office ; or, by virtue of instructions which leave to him some latitude of managing the affairs of his judicature in a discretionary way. And yet as no change would hereby be made in the law, this would be dispensation in a less proper sense.

In the most proper sense, dispensation belongs to the legislative part of government, being the act of the same power that made the former law now dispensed with ; and is an act of the same

kind, viz. of legislation, or the making a new law that alters the former it hath relation to. And this is the case here: The former law is dispensed with by the making of a new one, which (as hath been shewn) alters and changes it in its matter and frame and more immediate end. And a changed law is not the same.

Nor is it all strange that the minatory part of the law of works connected with the preceptive, so as to constitute the debt of punishment, should be now within the compass of the Redeemer's law. For by this applied and urged on the consciences of sinners, the necessary preparatory work for their recovery is performed, viz. the awakening and humbling and reducing them to a just and useful despair of relief and help, otherwise than by his merciful hand and vouchsafement; and for the rendering them hereby capable of his following applications. Cutting or lancing with other such severities are as proper and useful a part of a surgeon's business, as the applying of healing medicines. Nor have these incisions the same design and end for which wounds are inflicted by an enemy, one being meant to take away life, the other to save it. And the matter is out of doubt, that the most rigorous determination of the penalty, understood as *duly belonging to the least sin*, hath a place, and doth stand visibly extant to view in the publickly avowed declarations

of the Redeemer, in which we read that *whosoever shall say to his brother, thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.* \* *That the wages of sin is death.* † *That as many as are of the works of the law, are under the curse.* And we are told, that *the scripture* (which is the word of Christ, and was written not for innocent, but lapsed man,) *hath concluded all under sin.* Where also we find what is the true intent and end of this rough and sharp dealing with men, this shutting them up, like sentenced malefactors (which seems to be the import of the word here used) *that the promise by faith of Jesus Christ might be given to them that believe.* ‡ or, *to them believing,* as the words may be read. And moreover, the spirit, which breathes not in the law of works as such, but in the law of grace, under the name of the spirit of bondage, applies and binds on the sentence of death, as due to the guilty person.

Therefore we must understand the Redeemer's constitution to have two parts. 1. An assertion and establishment of the ancient penalty due for every transgression, and to be certainly inflicted on all such as accept not the the following offer of mercy upon the prescribed terms. Whereby the honour and justice of the creator is salved and vindicated in reference to that first covenant

\* Matt. v. 20. † Rom. vi. 23. ‡ Gal. iii. 10, and 22.



made with man. And the case of the sinner is plainly stated to him, that he may have a distinct and right apprehension of it. 2. The grant of pardon and eternal life to those that repent unfeignedly of their sins, and turn to God; believing in the mediator, and resigning themselves to his grace and government, to be by him conducted and made acceptable to God in their return, and that continue herein sincere to the end. Whereby the wonderful mercy of God in Christ is demonstrated, and the remedy is provided and ascertained to the otherwise lost and hopeless sinner.

And these two parts of the Redeemer's constitution are to be considered distinctly, though not separately. The sinner is at once to view the same penalty as naturally and by divine sanction due to him; but now graciously to be remitted: the same blessedness as justly lost, but mercifully to be restored with an high improvement. And to own both these jointly as the voice of the Redeemer in his gospel. Death is due to thee, blessedness forfeited by thy having sinned; but if thou sincerely repent, believe, and obey for the future, thou art pardoned and entitled to everlasting life.

IT THEREFORE NOW APPEARS, THAT AS THE LAW OR DICTATES OF PURE NATURE, (COMPREHENDED TOGETHER WITH OTHER FIT ADDITIONALS,) BECAME AT FIRST A CONSTI-

TUTION SUITED TO THE GOVERNMENT OF MAN IN HIS INNOCENT STATE, TO WHICH THE TITLE OF LAW, OR COVENANT OF WORKS, DID WELL AGREE; SO THE SAME NATURAL DICTATES, TRANSCRIBED AND MADE LEGIBLE (BECAUSE NOW SULLIED IN THE CORRUPT NATURE OF MAN) DO, WITH SUCH ALLAYS AND ADDITIONS AS THE CASE REQUIRED, COMPOSE AND MAKE UP THE CONSTITUTION WHICH BEARS THE TITLE OF THE LAW OR COVENANT OF GRACE, OR THE LAW OF FAITH, OR THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST; AND IS ONLY SUITABLE TO THE STATE OF MAN LAPSED AND FALLEN, AS THE MEASURE OF THAT RIGHTEOUSNESS WHICH HE IS NOW TO AIM AT, AND ASPIRE UNTO.

The rule of this righteousness therefore being evidently the law of faith, *i. e.* the gospel revelation wherein it is preceptive of duty; this righteousness can be understood to be nothing but the impress of the gospel upon a man's heart and life, a conformity in spirit and practice to the revelation of the will of God in Jesus Christ, a collection of graces exerting themselves in suitable actions and deportments towards God and man; *Christ formed* in the soul; or *put on*, the new creature in its being and operations; *the truth*.

*learned as it is in Jesus, to the putting off the old man, and the putting on the new.*

The above *Extract*, is from a discourse of Mr. HOWE'S on the *Blessedness of the righteous*. From p. 25, to 38.

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Justification, so little differs from pardon, that the same act is pardon, being done by God as a sovereign ruler acting above law, viz. *the law of works*; and justification, being done by him as sustaining the person of a judge, according to law, viz. *the law of grace*.

HOWE'S *Living Temple*. Vol. II. p. 447.

*FINIS.*





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